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15¢

Adventure

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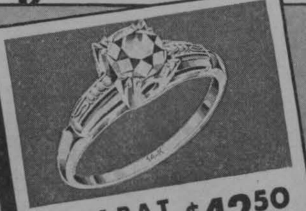

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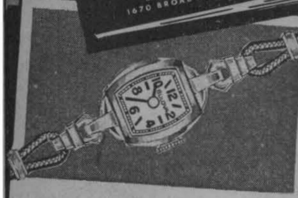

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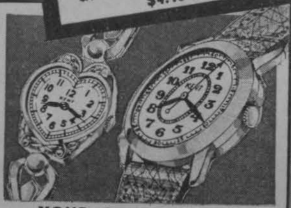

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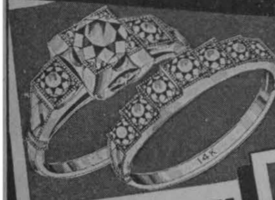

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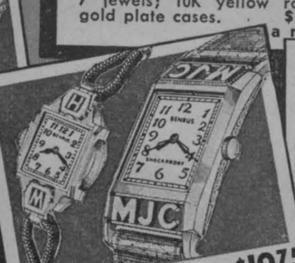

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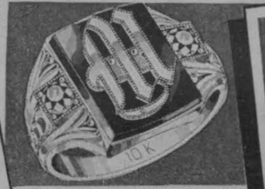

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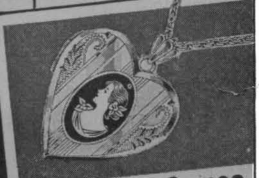

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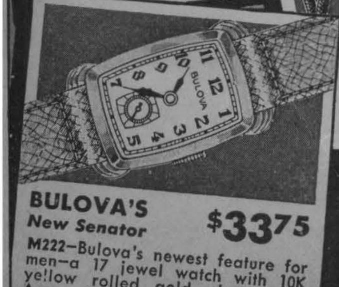

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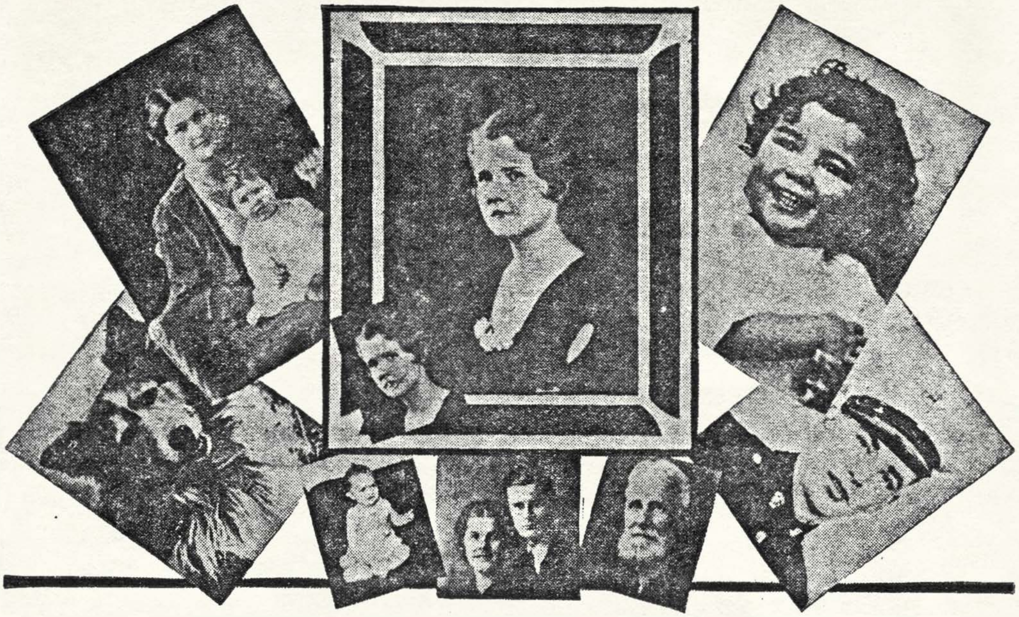

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JULY ISSUE ON SALE JUNE 7TH

Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Vol. 103, No. 2

for June, 1940

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Spy of the North (1st part of 4) . . . . **LUKE SHORT** 6
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Cover by Stockton Mulford
Headings by Hamilton Greene, I. B. Hazelton, Peter Kuhlhoff and George Wert
Howard V. L. Bloomfield, Editor

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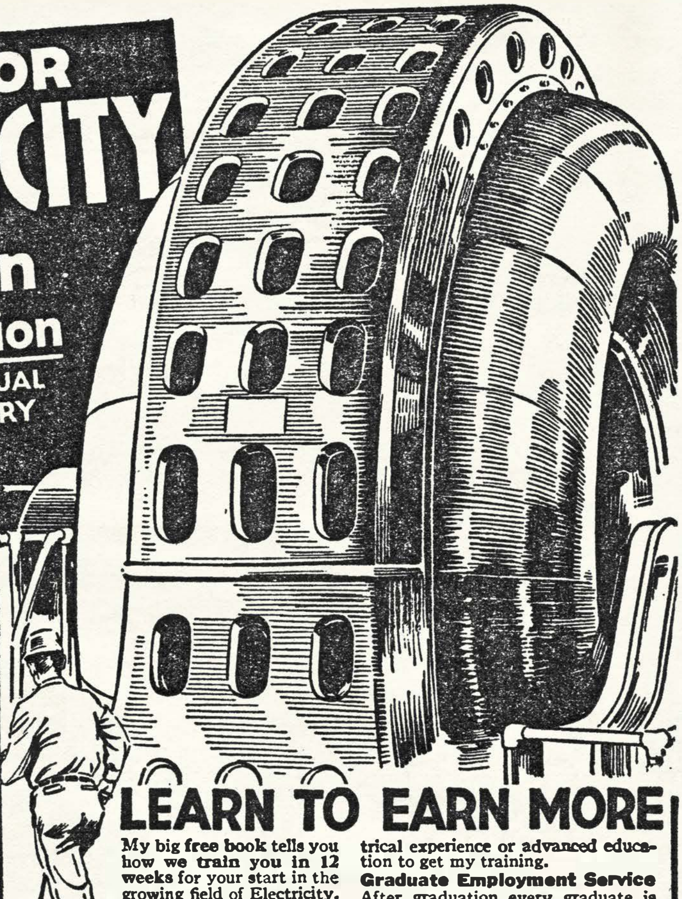

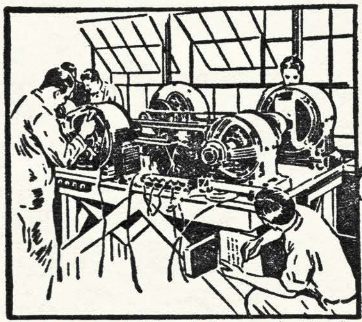

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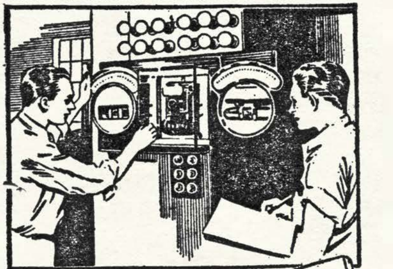

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LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or the fates. For the benefit of the friend you seek, give your own name and full address if possible. All inquiries along this line, unless otherwise designated, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, every inquiry addressed to "Lost Trails" will be run in three consecutive issues.

Guy C. Pinney, Conneautville, Pa., R.D. 4, wants word of his son Roscoe Clarance Pinney, who left Sheridan, Wyo., in 1919 or 1920. He enlisted in the 81st Battalion Canadian Expeditionary Force, Sept. 1915, served in the First Brigade Co. F.A., France, discharged July 12, 1919. Five ft. 11 in. tall, fair, blue eyes, now 43 years old, left-handed. Last heard from indirectly in Santa Barbara, Calif.

George Richardson, woolsorter—served apprenticeship at "Willey's" in England. Came to So. Barre, Mass., in 1924, returned to England, went to New Zealand, Tasmania and Australia. Last heard from him at South Melbourne, Victoria, March 2, 1931, was leaving within a week for Broken Hill, New South Wales. Word appreciated by Carle Fossett, P.O. Box 264, Barre, Mass.

Joseph William Baldwin, last heard of in Detroit, Dec., 1929, reared in Rochester, N. Y.; age, 42. Information appreciated by his sister, Mrs. Clyde W. Cook, 54 Davis St., Bradford, McKean Co., Penna.

Jack Bailey, erstwhile adventurer and soldier of fortune, please communicate with your old partner from San Jose, Calif., Chet (Piute Kid) Moore, c/o Adventure Magazine.

I would like to contact any members of C.C.C. Co. 885, stationed at Chandler, Okla., and Gillette, Wyo., Leon Rainwater, 818-17 Street, N.W., Washington, D. C.

Would like to get in touch with Albert McAuley who left Port Glasgow, Scotland, about 1923 for Canada. Bert Copley, 11741 Steel Ave., Detroit, Mich.

Fourth annual convention and reunion of former sailors and marines of the U.S.S. Connecticut. Open to all who served at any time either as officers or enlisted men aboard the Connie.—Oct. 19, Philadelphia. Further information by writing Fayette N. Knight, Nat. Capt., Nat'l Assn. of U.S.S. Connecticut Vets., Box 487, Closter, New Jersey.

Wanted information of whereabouts of Alex Heida, last seen in Scottsbluff, Neb., in 1933 or 1934. L. F. Campbell, 107 West 7th Street, Muscatine, Iowa.

Desire contact General R. L. Hearn (LO SZE HAN) formerly Commander-in-Chief CHANG TSO LIN Manchurian Irregulars. "CAN DO! Everything 'DING HOW'." Address K. Hyde, Box 1731, San Francisco, California.

Marvin Arlington Harris, known to friends as Blackie or Sam Marvin, worked for Magnolia Petroleum Co., Dallas, Tex., from Oct. 1934, to Aug. 1935, as truck driver, worked for Joe D. Hughes, Inc., Houston, Texas, in December, 1938. He also has served in the army. Please notify his father, J. H. Harris, 316 East Gordon Drive, Decatur, Ala.

Wanted: Information concerning Charles Somcyock, veteran World War in the 4th Company located at Fort Slocum. From 1920 to 1926 was a bus driver, having his own bus. My Dad sold for him his bus on our farm near Newburgh, N. Y. Please communicate with Samuel J. Matychak, 42 North Cedar Street, Beacon, N. Y.

My uncle, Benjamin Hutchinson, who sailed from Vancouver, B. C., on S. S. Zealandia, Christmas, 1912, for Sydney, N. S. W., Australia, last known address, 462 High Street, West Maitland, Australia. May have moved to Newcastle nearby. Height, 6 ft. 2 in.; eyes, gray; hair, sandy; age, about 68. Write his nephew, Valentine Barber, P. O. Box 183, White Plains, N. Y.

All wartime members of the 33rd U.S. Division are asked to write Wm. Engel, Sec. 33rd Div. War Veterans Assoc., 127 North Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill. Reunion at Peoria, Ill., June 28-29-30, 1940. Col. Fred Barnett, P. O. Box 17, Covington, Kentucky.

Will James E. Turner, formerly Sergeant 16th Co. C.A.D., Fort Mills, P.I., later (1918-19) at Vladivostok, Siberia, communicate with his old friends: 1: Johnnie Dawson, 1600 California, San Francisco, Cal.; 2: Deemus, 1915 Fox Hills Drive, Los Angeles, Cal.; 3: Minnie X.Y.Z., 10634 Wellworth Ave., W. Los Angeles, Cal.? Turner was honorably discharged from Letterman Hospital, June 10th, 1920.

(Continued on page 125)

I jumped from $18 a week to $50 -- a Free Book started me toward this GOOD PAY IN RADIO

HERE'S How it Happened

by S. J. E.
(NAME AND ADDRESS SENT UPON REQUEST)

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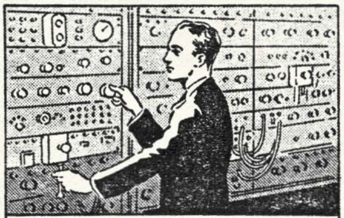

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Radio broadcasting stations employ engineers, operators, technicians. Radio manufacturers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, servicemen in good-pay jobs. Radio jobbers, dealers, employ installation and servicemen. Many Radio Technicians open their own Radio sales and repair businesses and make $30, $40, $50 a week. Others hold their regular jobs and make $5 to $10 a week fixing Radios in spare time. Automobile, police, aviation, Commercial Radio; loud-speaker systems, electronic devices are other fields offering opportunities for which N.R.I. gives the required knowledge of Radio. Television promises to open good jobs soon.

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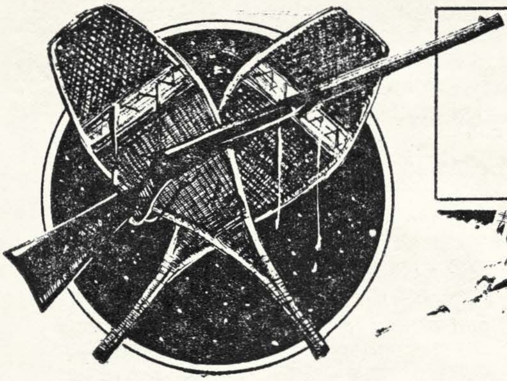

SPY OF

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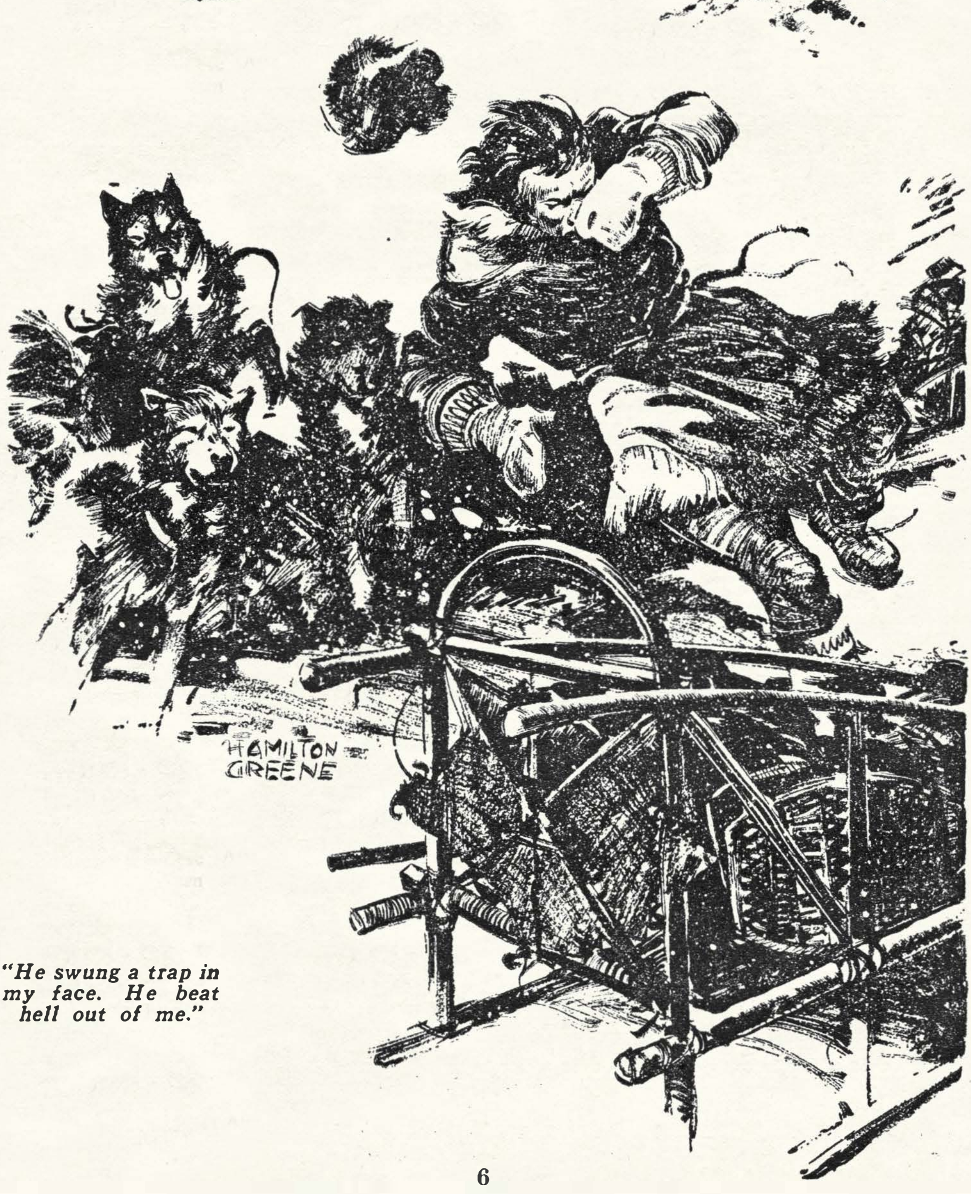
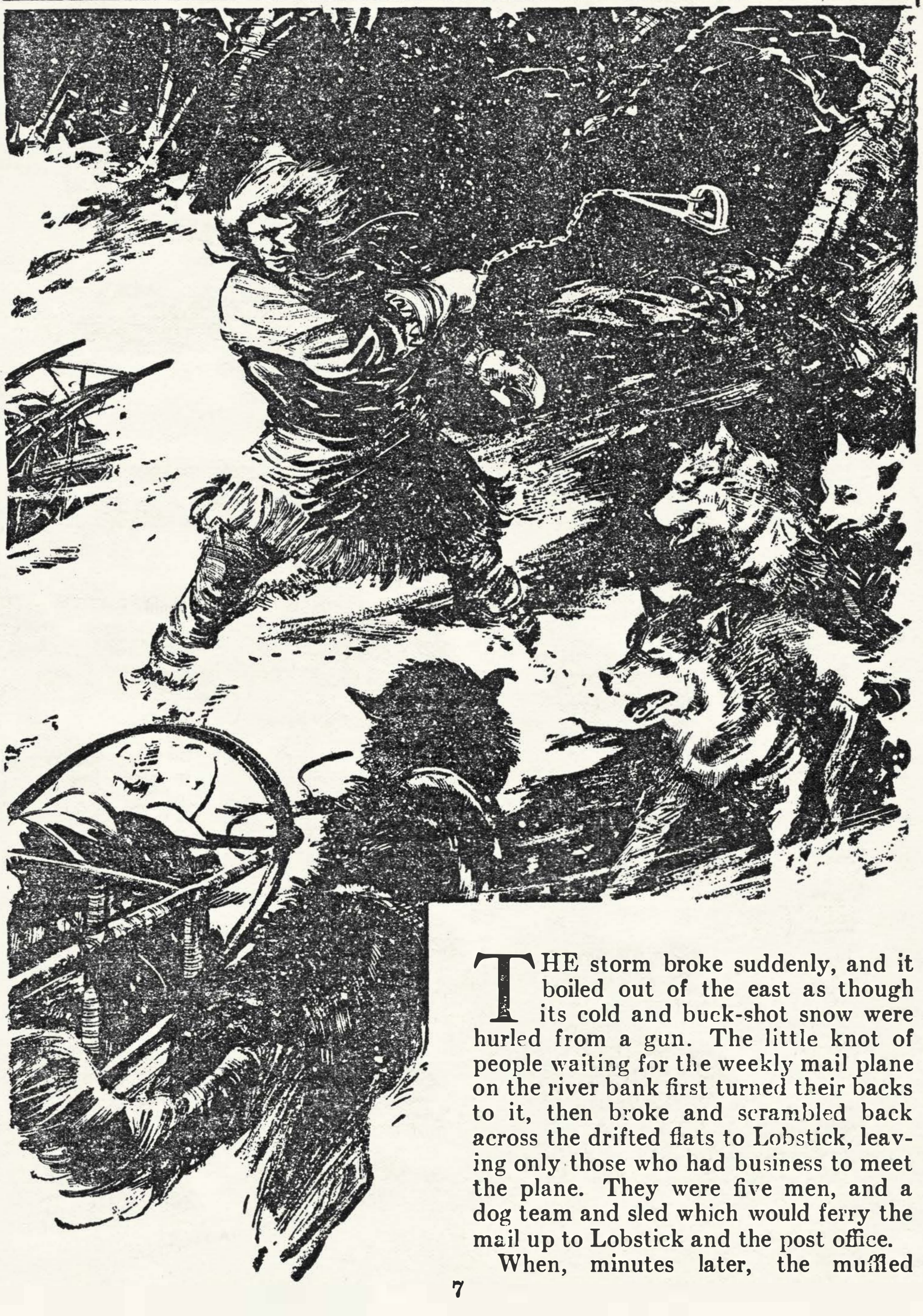

HAMILTON GREENE

"He swung a trap in my face. He beat hell out of me."

THE NORTH

LUKE SHORT



THE storm broke suddenly, and it boiled out of the east as though its cold and buck-shot snow were hurled from a gun. The little knot of people waiting for the weekly mail plane on the river bank first turned their backs to it, then broke and scrambled back across the drifted flats to Lobstick, leaving only those who had business to meet the plane. They were five men, and a dog team and sled which would ferry the mail up to Lobstick and the post office.

When, minutes later, the muffled

drone of the plane sounded overhead, a sixth man broke away from the shelter of some stacked oil drums and walked out to join the others. He was a tall man whose worn and shapeless parka did not hide the breadth of his shoulders nor the long length of his legs. His bush dress—parka, moccasins, beaver cap, mittens on a cord looped through the parka collar—set him apart from the others, who wore sheepskins or mackinaws and lace boots.

He came up to one man whose identity was given away by the yellow outseam on his dark blue breeches, paused, and said above the wind, "He could use a radio beam today."

Corporal Millis turned. The recognition in his pale eyes and broad face came slowly. He studied the taller man, the lean black beard-stubbled jaw, the green eyes deep-welled under black brows, and his first thought was that this was a sober young man, almost unfriendly. And with that came recognition, and he shucked off his mitten and put out a square hand.

"Hello, Nearing. Haven't seen you for months."

"Since before freeze-up," Frank Nearing said. They shook hands.

"How're things up on Christmas Creek?" The corporal's broad face twisted in a grimace. "What a name for that God-forgotten hole! How was the fall hunt?"

"So-so."

Corporal Millis looked up at the sky then. The plane was a misty shape above them as it hurtled down wind for its circle into the wind before landing on the immaculate snow of the river. Frank Nearing watched it too, and Corporal Millis regarded him obliquely, carefully. This was the young chap who had come to him in early summer, a silent Cree Indian for a companion, and had announced his intention of prospecting and trapping up the Wailing River around the Christmas Creek country. Millis had not seen him since, and he was faintly troubled at the change he noticed. There was a kind of ferocious reserve in the man's eyes, and a lean, wolfish look that a man gets who is working harder than he should. Millis was curious.

Frank Nearing, aware of that look, gave Millis time for it, because a policeman is supposed to know his people. Then he glanced at him, and Millis' look slid away.

"You must be pretty anxious for your mail," Millis observed.

"No. My partner's coming in on this plane."

"That a fact?" Millis' voice was unconcerned, but his interest was sharp. He was a good man, Frank knew; and Frank wanted to satisfy him.

"You three will find pretty thin pickings up in that country."

"We'll make our grub in fur this winter. Mostly, we want to prospect back in the McFarlane country next summer."

"It's a big country," Millis remarked, and the tone of his voice told Frank that he was satisfied for the moment. The hardest part of this was to come.

THE plane came down in a long slow glide into the wind; its skis touched the river and the snow foamed up from them like water from the prow of a boat. It taxied over toward them, and the mail dogs suddenly started barking and snarling. When the plane stopped some yards short of the bank, the group broke and streamed down to the river.

Frank left Millis on the bank, and went down too. A sudden uneasiness was on him, and his heart was pumping with a controlled excitement. This was the moment he had been dreading—and for an audience he had the one man he must impress with the casualness of the thing.

The door of the old Bellanca opened, slammed shut in the wind, and was forced open again and hooked. Then a man stepped out, and Frank's attention was narrowed to him for an instant. He was lean, dark, young, and thoroughly drunk. He missed the step, pitched into the snow, and was hauled up laughing by two of his friends, who took his baggage from the pilot and guided him away. Frank ignored him.

His attention was all for the man who next stepped out, and his hard eyes studied him with a faint excitement stirring them. He was a burly giant in boots and sheepskin. This was his man.

Frank called, "Hello Lute!"—and waited, for he had never seen the man before.

The big man's reactions were expert. He smiled broadly and called "Hello, fella," and then they met and shook hands.

The stranger had sensed the game. His solid heavy face was smiling easily, and he looked at Frank with a feigned fondness that was nevertheless searching.

"How's Uncle Joe?" Frank asked above the roar of the idling motor.

"Fine. Sent his regards. You're looking good, Frank—a little thin, but good."

And all this time Corporal Millis, his blue eyes veiled and watchful, was seeing and hearing this and not wondering.

The pilot handed out Lute's luggage, and Frank took it, then guided Lute up the bank to Corporal Millis.

"Corporal Millis, this is Lute Westock."

Millis put out his hand and said, "So you're the new partner Frank's been telling me about? Well, you picked a cold roost, you three."

Westock smiled. He had a blond, scrubbed look about him, and an iron command of himself.

"Nice to meet you, Corporal," he said. Nothing more. Frank knew then with a vast and sudden relief that he was not going to overplay his hand.

"Let's get out of this blast," Millis said.

He turned toward the road which came off the river and crossed the hundred yards of drifted flats to enter the town of Lobstick.

Heads down against the driving wind that made talk almost useless, they walked abreast up the trail. Ahead of them, propped unsteadily between two larger men, was the drunk. He wore new boots, whose slippery soles did not help his footing, and a long blanket coat. His largest companion carried a bulging duffle bag over his shoulder.

Westock said to Frank, "Who's the rummy, Frank?"

"I don't know."

Millis said, "He's Bruce McIvor, a worthless young pup. He went out to join up with the Air Force, and was rejected."

They were soon at the head of Lobstick's main street. Two dozen gaunt-ribbed log stores with false fronts faced each other across the ice-rutted road.

The trio ahead turned left, heading for the alley, while Millis and Frank and Westock continued straight, aiming for the street.

There was a sudden commotion, and Frank looked over to notice that the drunk had fallen again. This time, he pulled one companion down with him.

This man's voice, rough and savage, said, "Quit it, Bruce. Damn it, stand up!"

Millis saw it, looked away and said to Lute, "How're things outside?"

Frank didn't hear Lute's reply; the two men had picked up the drunk and were taking him down the alley. A sack, which had dropped out of the duffle, lay on the ice.

Frank stopped, saw they had not noticed it, then walked the few steps over to the sack and called; "Hold on, there!"

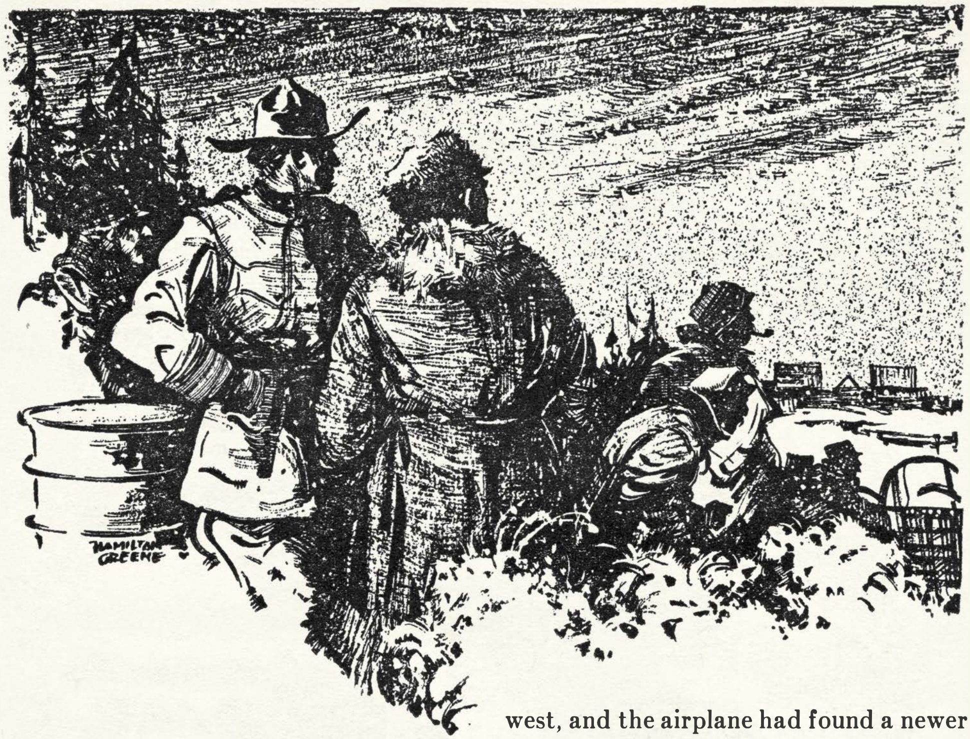
He knelt to pick up the package. Its container, ordinary grocery sacks doubled, had burst on the ice, and a fine white powder inside spilled out. Frank picked it up gingerly and walked toward the three, who were coming back now. They stopped when Frank came up to them.

"You dropped this out of your pack," Frank said.

For one brief second the three of them stared silently at the sack. Then the biggest man said quickly, "Looks like borax. Here, dump it in my pocket."

He looked across at Millis, who was still walking across the road beside Lute and still talking, then held his mackinaw pocket open. Frank deposited the sack in it and dusted his mittens briefly, suddenly aware that they were watching him in utter silence. He looked at the big man, whose soft dark eyes were alertly curious in his big square-jawed face. The man said curtly, "Thank you," dismissing him.

As he caught up with Millis, Westock was talking with Millis about the war news. Another safe subject. Frank knew suddenly that there was nothing to fear. Westock knew his part.



THE steady snow was softening the outlines of this unlovely town squatting between the Raft river and the black bush. rising tier on tier back into unmapped bush and muskeg. A hundred years ago the fur brigades had boiled into it at the end of the staggering portage from the landlocked lakes to the north; they had howled and sung here before facing the wild lower reaches of the Raft's white water.

A company governor had dined here off the silver plate that was carried for him in his fleet of batteaux. He had watched the lobstick out on the point cut in his honor, and had smiled bleakly at the childish Indians who were honoring him and whom he was bleeding of beaver and pelts in exchange for rusty guns.

That lobstick, a tall spruce shorn of all its limbs except a broad tuft at the top, had long since been undermined and washed away by the savage floods of the Raft. The timbers of the old stockade were fallen and rotted now. The steamboat had found safer waterways to the west, and the airplane had found a newer way.

Even the company had deserted the post, and the shell of it fell away, leaving this tight stubborn core of a score of stores which lived from the furs gleaned from the wilderness.

That core, Lobstick today, was remote, lonely, unmentioned, forgotten save by the police, by the church, and by the weekly mail plane. The nights were darker here.

At the two-story log hotel down the street, Millis left them, after shaking hands and wishing them luck. Frank led the way through the hot lobby and mounted the stairs to his sparsely furnished room.

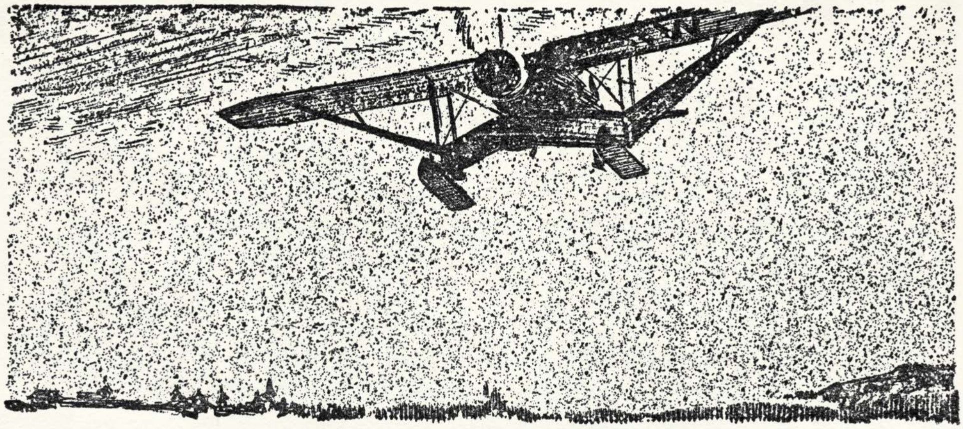
Once the door was closed, he and Westock faced each other.

"Did I do all right?" Westock asked.

"Perfect. He's got us pegged as two mining men out of a job."

Frank slipped out of his mittens and parka, peeled off his beaver cap, tossed them both on the bed, and knelt in front of the rickety commode. He opened it, brought out a bottle and two glasses, and rose.

He confronted Westock, who was holding out a slip of paper. Westock said,



The plane banked over toward them.

"One thousand dollars deposited to your account in the bank you specified."

Frank pocketed it without looking at it and poured two drinks while Westock shed his coat, and then he handed one glass to Westock.

"Luck."

"To our new partnership," Westock supplemented. They drank.

Frank settled his loose frame on the table and put his shoulders against the wall. Drawing out cigarette papers and pouch, he rolled a cigarette with broad and big-knuckled hands, and studied Westock with a lazy and careful attention. In repose his face had a leaned-down soberness, an unsmiling gravity. His eyes, deep-recessed under thick black brows, were alert and cold and shrewdly calculating. As soon as Westock sank on the bed with a satisfied grunt, Frank said, "Now that you're in here and the police aren't curious, just who the hell are you, Westock?"

There was a blunt and almost arrogant toughness in his manner of speech that brought Westock's gaze up to him in silent and questioning appraisal. Then Westock rubbed his palms together, because it was chill in there, and he asked, "What did Joe write about me?"

"That you wanted a place to hide. That you were willing to pay two thousand dollars for it, and that you weren't a criminal."

"That all?"

"No. He described you."

AND badly, Frank reflected. Joe had written that this man he was sending was big and blond. Frank had pictured him as jovial, loud and profane, like Joe Phillips himself. But this man was not. He was one of those rare big men whose every act is done with a small man's grace, but his pale eyes were utterly humorless, sober, watchful. His head was small, well-shaped, firmly modeled and strong at the thick cheekbones, and his hair was fine-spun and the color of dry corn shucks.

Under a worn plaid wind-breaker his shoulders were tremendous and thick; his manner of smoking a cigarette was almost ceremonial in its deliberation. Something about his scrubbed, sure hands, his alertly observant manner told Frank that in his thirty odd years Lute Westock had never been dirty and had never been denied much.

Lute said, "Joe didn't know much more than that himself."

"But *I* want to," Frank replied flatly.

"You mean you've lied to the police for me. Now you want to know what I'm trying to hide?"

"That's about it. And your name."

"There's no reason why I should tell you that," Westock said gravely.

"I'm the judge of that."

"Pardon me, but you are not," Westock said calmly, with an iron courtesy. "Observe that I'm not trying to deny Westock isn't my name, but my real one is no concern of yours, Frank. While you may get angry about it, I don't think you'll go to Millis and turn me in."

A faint admiration for this man's gall came to Frank, and with it a slow anger stirred. Frank fought that down, knowing his nerves were a little thin and his temper quick. The wind hammered at the windows, shaking them.

Frank's face was a little hot, but his expression did not change. He said, "Suit yourself about the name. But you'd better suit me about the other—why you're hiding."

"That's simple. I was once too well married."

Westock smiled faintly at Frank's scowl, and went on, "I had a lot of money once, before my divorce. My alimony to my wife was generous. Now, with hard times, I can't afford to pay it. She insists, and has the backing of the court. So I transfer my property to a partner, refuse to pay alimony, get a court summons, and then hunt a place to hide. When my wife finds she can't touch my property nor jail me, she'll compromise with my lawyers. Meanwhile, I'm paying two thousand dollars for food, shelter and complete anonymity." He spread his clean hands. "That's all."

Frank looked at him with quiet cynicism, leaned forward, dropped his cigarette on the floor, ground it out, then said quietly, "No dice."

"Meaning what?"

"Your story stinks. You'll have to do better than that."

"I'm sorry you think so. It's the truth."

"You won't give me the right one?"

"You've got it."

Frank rose slowly and came over to confront Westock. His big hands were on his hips, and in his taciturn face was a deep and savage intolerance.

He had his mouth open to speak, when a firm knock came on the door. He looked at it, annoyed, then crossed over and opened it.

A girl was standing in the corridor. She said, "Are you the man up on Wailing River?"

"Yes."

"I'd like to talk to you."

Frank stepped aside and the girl entered the room. Westock rose as she came in. She was not a tall girl, and she was wearing a solid color blue flannel shirt open at the throat, a heavy tweed skirt and laced field boots. Chestnut hair lay in twin thick braids around her head, and beyond that Frank did not have time to look at her, except to notice that she was out of breath, uncertain of herself, and so excited that her blue eyes were shining. She carried a sheepskin coat over her arm. She lifted it now, brought out a new pair of mittens, laid them on the commode, then said to Frank, "I'm going to make a trade with you."

She saw Frank's parka on the bed, turned it over and picked up his mittens. "That's a fair exchange, I think," she said, and started for the door. Lute was ahead of Frank. Lute brushed past her, slammed the door, and leaned against it, an expression of wariness on his face. The girl was at a loss for a moment. She looked over at Frank and asked, "Will you ask him to let me go?"

Lute said mildly, "Forgive my curiosity, but you were listening at the door, weren't you?"

"I was not!" the girl answered angrily.

Lute smiled, his eyes faintly ugly. "I believe the practiced hotel eaves-dropper always carries some clean towels over her arm in case she is surprised. Maybe you're green at this."

Frank said, "Easy, Lute."

Lute looked beyond the girl to Frank. "Of course she was listening!"

The girl stepped back from Lute then and turned slowly to face Frank, a kind of pleading in her eyes.

"You'd better talk," Frank suggested.

"I just traded you mittens. That's a fair exchange, isn't it?"

"Maybe," Frank said slowly, "I don't like new mittens. Maybe I don't like mysteries either."

The girl bit her lip. She started to lay his mittens on the commode, then thought better of it. "Will you burn them, if I leave them?"

"No. Why should I?"

"Oh, why do you have to be so stubborn! I'll leave these new mittens! If you won't let me take the old ones, then promise to burn them!"

She looked at Frank; he was regarding her with a deep and puzzled bewilderment, and then she turned to Lute. There was more than suspicion in his face; it was an actual dislike.

And he did not move to get out of the way.

He said, "How much did you hear, my dear?"

Frank looked angrily at Lute, but Lute was watching the girl. And she had suddenly made up her mind.

"All right," she said brusquely, and spoke to Frank alone. "I suppose it's too much to ask you not to repeat this."

Frank didn't answer.

She said, "Those mittens of yours have strychnine on them."

FRANK, bewildered, came over and took his mittens from her. Lute looked on as Frank turned them palm up; a white dust still clung to the worn hide and filled the creases. The package he had picked up, the strained look of those three men by the alley all came back to him then, and he said quietly, "Sit down."

The girl sat on the edge of the bed. To Lute's questioning glance, Frank said, "That drunk and his friends dropped a package. It broke, and I picked it up." He said to the girl, "Who told you?"

"My brother. He was the drunk. He was afraid. You could have killed a couple of your dogs tonight when you fed them. You might even have got it yourself."

Frank nodded. "Your brother peddles the stuff?"

"No!" the girl said shortly, and then added, less sure of herself, "That is, I don't think so. Oh, I don't know why he did it, except that he does those things and always has! But I'll make him destroy it—all of it."

"He traps?"

"That's what's queer; he doesn't. He's no bushman. He hates the bush and is afraid of it. I—think he was bringing it in to sell to some of these bush tramps who are too lazy to work at trapping and would rather poison their fur." She paused now, a kind of stiff pride in her face. "Are you going to tell Millis?"

Lute, who had been listening carefully to this, said, "That depends, Miss—"

"McIvor. Kelcy McIvor."

"Are you quite sure you didn't hear anything beyond that door?" Lute asked.

Frank's voice rapped out sharply, "Shut up, Lute!"

The girl came to her feet in the on-running silence, her manner brisk. She said calmly to Frank, "I don't think you'll tell Corporal Millis. Your friend here is worried that I might have overheard something. I didn't, but I'm not completely stupid. Both of you must have something you don't want known." She looked levelly at Frank. "In case you go to Millis with this story, I propose to go to him also. I'll ask him to take a little care in checking your past history, both of you. Do you understand?" To Lute she said in a contemptuous voice, "Blackmail works both ways, my friend. Now please let me go."

At a nod from Frank, Lute stepped aside and opened the door. The girl paused in it and looked back at Frank.

"The man from Wailing River," she murmured gently, almost mockingly, with a deep running impudence. "You're just as unfriendly as you look, and there's not much mystery left, is there?"

"Was there ever?" Frank asked coldly.

The girl nodded. "We're human here, and curious about you. But I'm not any more. Because when two people blackmail each other into silence, it's almost certain to be for shabby reasons. Mine is smuggled strychnine. I don't think yours is any better."

She went out then, and Lute softly closed the door behind her. In the fading daylight, Frank and Lute regarded each other in utter silence.

Then Frank said in a thick voice, "I didn't take you for a clumsy damned fool. You are."

Lute didn't say anything, and Frank went on, his voice hard and edged with temper. "That girl didn't hear anything. But your ham actor's hush-hush has got her suspicious now."

Lute said curtly, "That's my worry, Frank, not yours. I'm the one who has to be careful!"

"You bloody fool," Frank murmured, his voice cold with scorn. "I've lived in this country since summer. I've talked to nobody, seen nobody, kept them away from me. I've done it for a reason—a good reason. Beside it, your secret doesn't count a damn!"

Lute said, with a puzzled contriteness, "I didn't know that, Frank."

"You know it now," Frank said bitterly. "Why do you think I'm hiding a man I don't know anything about? It's because I need your money enough to risk prison to get it. Did you think about that?"

"How could I? I don't even know whether you'll hide me."

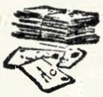
Frank wheeled, disgust in his face, and walked over to the window. He stood looking out on the darkening town, and the snow drove steadily outside, clawing at the eaves of the room and hollowly shaking the windows. His face was bleak, strained.

He heard Lute move, and then say in a matter-of-fact voice. "I still don't know. What are you going to do about me?"

"I'll hide you," Frank said slowly. Then he turned, and peered through the gloom at Lute. "Westock, keep your mouth shut from now on. Let me play this my way. If you don't, I'll break you in two. I mean it!"

CHAPTER II

THE MAN FROM WAILING RIVER



LOBSTICK'S post office was in one walled-off front corner of Robb McIvor's big store. Kelcy waited until the mail was racked, and the usual people were clotted about the radio waiting for the war-news at six o'clock, and then she sent her father home for supper. As soon as he was gone, she got a coat and slipped outside.

It had been dark almost two hours now, and thick snow blurred the lights from the stores across the street. Kelcy put up her parka hood and sought the road, then traveled downstreet to the hotel and beyond. The gasoline lamps from the stores laid a bright lattice in the clean snow, but Kelcy did not notice this tonight.

At a dingy restaurant whose windows were frosted almost to the top so that only the legend, *Star Cafe & Hotel,* was visible on the glass, she went in. Steaming heat smote her in the face like a soft pillow. A half dozen men eating at the counter paid no attention to her. The girl behind the cash register saw her first, and over her sulky, full-lipped face came an expression of surprise.

It was gone when Kelcy saw her and came over and asked, "Is Saul around, Bonnie?"

"Upstairs," Bonnie said tonelessly. She watched Kelcy walk past the counter seats, and Bonnie was smiling faintly, crookedly. She was a dark, handsome girl, full breasted, with sullen vivid lips, and deep brown eyes that were coldly and cynically curious now. When Kelcy opened the door beside the kitchen door and mounted the steps, Bonnie started for the stairs, then changed her mind and came slowly, thoughtfully back to the cash register.

Halfway up, the stairs turned at right angles and opened on a narrow lamp-lit corridor running the length of the narrow building.

A man was standing by an open door in front of one of the rooms; he closed the door now, and walked down to Kelcy. It was the square-jawed burly man in whose coat pocket Frank had deposited the 'borax'.

Kelcy said wearily, "How is he?" as she brushed her parka hood back and shook off the snow.

"Just woke up, and he can navigate," Saul Chenard said. He came up to her, his big thick body dwarfing Kelcy's. He put a hand on her arm, and said gently, "Kelcy, how do you put up with this?"

Kelcy smiled faintly. "I don't think I could if it wasn't for you, Saul."

Saul shook his head in sombre sympathy, and the lamp-light caught the sheen of his tight black curls and softened the hard line of his face. He had full pouting lips that went strangely with his rugged face and big body. He sighed. "Hell, I can't do anything with him. I'm not much help."

"You can hide him at times like this."

"Thank Bonnie for that," Saul said. He smiled faintly. "She likes him."

"We all do," Kelcy said wearily. "That's what makes it so hard."

Saul hesitated and then said casually, "What about the two Rover Boys?"

Kelcy grimaced. "It didn't work, and I had to tell them. But I don't think they'll tell Millis."

"No?" Beneath Saul's casualness was an alert attention.

"They thought I'd been keyhole snooping at their door. They were talking about something very private. Anyway, I pretended I had overheard, and told them that we'd both better forget Millis. They agreed, and quickly too."

Saul laughed silently, then, and shook his head in admiration.

"You're a wonderful girl, Kelcy, a lot better sister than that brother of yours deserves."

Kelcy only smiled and said, "May I see him?"

Saul led the way back into a clean, bare room containing only an iron bed, a dresser, desk and one chair. Bruce McIvor, his reckless swarthy face blurred and heavy with sleep, looked up to regard Kelcy from where he was sitting on the edge of the bed.

She came over to him and silently combed his black hair with her fingers. "Hit the deck, Bruce. We're going home."

"What's Dad said?" Bruce asked.

"I told him you were so disappointed at being rejected that you took a drop too much, and were ashamed to show up until you were sober."

A wry humor lighted Bruce's thin face. "What about—the strychnine?"

"That's fixed too," Kelcy said levelly. "I got to Nearing before any harm was done. He won't tell."

Bruce came unsteadily to his feet and shook his head. He had to steady himself by grabbing the foot of the iron bed.

Kelcy watched him with a dismal look in her eyes. "Bruce, how could you be such a fool as to bring that stuff back?" she asked miserably.

"No sermons," Bruce said sharply. He looked at her, the wildness in his face close to breaking through, and Kelcy bit her lip.

Saul shifted his feet faintly and said, "Kid, you'll take a sermon from me and like it. The only reason Millis hasn't got you in the clink now is because you're lucky."

"All right," Bruce said, not even looking up.

Saul's voice bore down. "I mean it. That little poison idea of yours laid a nice train of powder. If it's discovered, you'll go to jail. Kelcy will be dragged in it for hiding knowledge, and so will I."

Bruce was bent over, lacing his boots. His hands paused, holding the laces, and for a moment it was utterly quiet. They were waiting for his temper to flare up. Finally, he said, "All right," calmly.

Kelcy said with relief, "Hurry home now. Bruce. No more liquor. I've got to get back to the store."

WHEN they heard her descend the stairs, Bruce looked up.

There was wicked anger in his eyes.

"You bloody fraud," he said thinly to Saul. "Don't do that again, not ever."

"Don't be a damn fool," Saul said calmly. "I had to. Kelcy doesn't suspect where that strychnine's going, and she mustn't."

"So you blame me for it."

"You get your cut out of the fur," Saul pointed out coldly. "Besides, no harm's done. She believes she got it all. By tonight, the boys will be out in the bush with the rest of it. Why all the yelping?"

Bruce stood up and stamped his feet into his boots. Then he looked at Saul.

"I just don't like it," he said quietly. "Another thing I don't like."

"You're a regular prima donna tonight, kid," Saul said dryly.

Bruce looked at him steadily. "I overheard that soap you handed Kelcy out there in the hall. I'm warning you, Saul. Stay away from her."

Saul's face hardened imperceptibly. He said nothing and Bruce went on calmly, "I'm neck deep in this cheap racket of yours. But keep Kelcy out of it. And keep away from her or I'll kill you!"

The sound of footsteps on the stairs silenced him. In a moment, Bonnie sauntered through the door. Bruce's eyes lighted up at sight of her. She came over and kissed him lingeringly and said, "Down off your binge, honey?"

Bruce grinned, and the smile lighted up his face. "Down to rock bottom. Been good while I was gone, Bonnie?"

"Better than butter," Bonnie said.

Saul murmured matter-of-factly, "If you want to catch your old man before he gets back to the store, you better light out, kid."

When he was gone, Bonnie put her shoulders against the wall and folded her arms in front of her.

"Another talk with the Duchess," she sneered. "Was it thrilling?"

"Lay off," Saul said curtly.

"Who asked her to come here?"

"I didn't. She came to send the kid home." Saul's eyes were sullen. He said, "I don't like that kid's hands on you, Bonnie."

"Who told me to make a play for him?"

Saul looked at her a moment, then turned to go. Bonnie came up to him and put her arms around his neck. "Saul, why do we fight like this?" she asked softly. "Why don't we get out of here?"

Saul patiently untwined her arms, and Bonnie looked at him bitterly. "How much money do you want, Saul?"

"More than I've got," Saul said dryly. "Beat it, now."

"Kiss me, and I will."

Saul kissed her. When she had gone he went out into the corridor and down to the end room.

THREE men were playing poker at a table under the overhead kerosene lamp, using pennies for chips. They were unshaven, uncombed, and in worn and ragged coveralls. Three walls of the room were filled with double-tiered bunks.

Ostensibly, Saul ran a cheap hotel and restaurant, catering to the trappers and Indians in from the bush. They could put up here and have their dogs fed for fifty cents a night. In reality, it was a blind for Saul Chenard's real business. He employed six men, seasoned bushmen, quiet, furtive men who seldom saw the post.

He furnished them with the best dogs money could buy, and with strychnine.

From before the first snow until the fur began to rub, they traveled fast and light, penetrating into the far lakes, the bush country, the muskegs.

Behind them, they left a trail of deer and moose and caribou carcasses around which they scattered poisoned bait to attract the fur.

At the end of their long swing to the edge of the Barrens, they would return, picking up the fur that had fed off the carcasses and had died.

White fox, red, silver, cross, lynx, mink, weasels, birds—everything that would touch meat—was killed.

They could wipe a country clean of fur in a season with the fine white powder they carried. And their haul of fir, baled and hidden when they entered Lobstick, was fabulous. They were a scourge of which the police were ignorant, because they stayed far off the trails of the other trappers.

These three, half of his crew waiting for the strychnine Bruce McIvor had brought in today, greeted him quietly and went back to their cards. Saul pulled a chair over to the table and put a foot on it, then folded his arms and rested them on his knee.

"Joe, you ever get around to Wailing River?"

One of the men looked up from his cards and shook his head. He was a breed, and had the patient, inscrutable look of the Indian, which had conquered the white blood in him. "No fur that way."

"I want you to move out that way this trip. Starting tonight. And get this, and get it good. You'll use traps on the Wailing. No poison, you understand?"

The breed nodded. He put down his cards now, attentive, and protested, "But there's no fur, Saul."

"I don't give a damn. I want you to find out about that bird Nearing up there."

"All right."

"I want you to crowd him, Joe. If you find any of his sets up there, jerk his traps. Make trouble. Claim you've trapped the Wailing for ten years. Muss him up."

Joe looked dubiously at Saul. "Maybe he don't muss up."

Saul smiled. "He'll stay out of trouble, Joe. I can promise you that. He's not anxious to have Millis take a good look at him, and he'll take his riding."

"Okay," Joe said. Then he added, "You want the Wailing for us, Saul?"

"Hell no," Saul said. He straightened up and swung the chair away. "I'm just curious about Nearing. He's in the lonesomest damn spot in this country. I want to know why, and if my hunch is right, I can stop his mouth any time I want."

"Stop his mouth?" one of the other men asked.

Saul scowled, and then laughed. "That's right. He saw that poison the kid brought in this afternoon, and he says he won't tell Millis. I wonder why?"

CHAPTER III

VENGEANCE TRAIL

FRANK didn't like Lute. He came to this conclusion after a day of being with Lute, watching him buy his outfit, talking to him and observing him. It wasn't wholly because of what had happened the afternoon before. There was something about his new partner, a deep arrogance overlaid by courtesy, a humorless skepticism, a deep reserve, that Frank could neither break through nor understand.

That night Frank lay sleepless in his hotel room. He was remembering Lute as he bought his outfit—rifle, moccasins, parka, bedroll, duffles, mittens, everything—and he was suspicious. For a man who had been rich once, Lute knew bush ways. He had shown the unbending taste of a bushman in his purchases. It was a little thing, but strange, and it troubled Frank.

During those sleepless hours, Frank again weighed his decision, as he had weighed it before. It was not too late to back out from this new partnership. But the money, the two thousand dollars that he needed so desperately, held him to his decision.

That knowledge rode him, and drew his nerves wire thin. There was trouble ahead with Lute. He was tough, secretive, with a temper close to the surface. And sooner or later, Frank must tell him his own secret. He could not hide it, the way Lute could hide his. That secret that he had shared with one man, Charlie Cree, his Indian man, had grown a part of him. Sooner or later, he must share it with Lute. When?

Before he slept he decided to wait until they got to Christmas Creek. That was the place. And drowsing off, he schemed of ways to bind Lute more tightly to him.

Before daylight next morning, they were headed up the Raft. It was a tough river, and the higher it went the tougher it got. A half day's travel above Lobstick, where it was crowded between towering rough-faced walls so steep that the snow did not cling to them, there was a crack in the north face of the wall. Gaunt black ramparts broke away to reveal an opening, snow-floored, narrow, serene. This was the Wailing. Entering it, a man dived into a gloom that never saw the sun, himself and his dogs dwarfed by the ugly porphyry cliffs, and his spirit was awed.

The shore line was barren, for the race of its waters and its rock face had won over a stubborn Nature, and nothing grew here. Below the ice, the rumble of the boiling waters was constant, filling the canyon mazes with its whisper.

It was a little after noon, with Lute ahead breaking trail with the small trail shoes, when they reached the junction of the Wailing and the Raft. The snow still held, boiling out of the east at their backs, spreading its swirling curtain on the trees, weighing them down, wiping out all the game tracks, and making this a new country. Lute was paused there at the mouth of the Wailing, waiting for Frank, who checked the team and walked past them. His dogs were five matched sons of a Coronation Gulf husky mother, big-boned and raffish looking. They lay in their traces, tongues dragging, tails wagging, breath riming their muzzles with frost.

When Frank approached, Lute pointed to the snow. "Someone turned up here yesterday. That your man Charlie?"

Frank didn't even look at the snow. "For a rich man divorced from a rich wife, you read bush sign pretty well, Lute."

Lute's bland face didn't change. "Don't I? But I wasn't talking about that. You told me you never saw a stranger on Christmas Creek. What about this?" He indicated the trail.

Frank knelt by the toboggan trail that swung in the crack of the cliffs. His own trail, old, was faintly discernible, hugging the near shore. A second trail, fresher, missed his, but swung into the Wailing also. It puzzled him. The Indians were afraid of the Wailing; the trappers shunned it, for not until a man got to its headwaters would he find good fur country. It gave Frank a faint uneasiness, which he did not show to Lute.

He rose and said dryly, "Do you drive dogs too, Lute?"

"I'll try."

"Give me your shoes. I'll go ahead."

Lute toed out of his snowshoes, and gave them to Frank. "Is it Charlie's trail?"

"I don't think so."

They traveled the rest of that day and long after dark up the Wailing, oppressed by its walls, its chill cold and its echoing sound. Occasionally, a tangle of drift wood thrust up through the ice, and even these were sinister reminders of its force, for they were as thick as a man's body and gnawed and shredded by the power in this restless river below them.

LONG after dark, when the canyons fell away and there was wood, they camped. Next morning they woke to a different country, bleaker, rougher, colder, lonely as the stars. Black spruce snarled the twisting river shore, and the man who had been before them still kept to the river. He had found Frank's trail, had hit every portage over the long points, and at midday they found his camp of the night before.

Frank studied it with a growing uneasiness. The man had six dogs, big ones. Little things, like his choice of a camp, the way he had rigged his tarp lean-to, the wood he had chosen for fuel, the way he chained out his dogs, told Frank many things.

And then Frank found the man's first set. It was a fox set, just at the head of a portage in timber so thick a fox traveling the river would take to the trail. Frank didn't bother to hang the trap—the universal warning to a trespasser in the North; he sprang the trap with a stick. In mid-morning, he found one of his own traps hung.

Working farther up the Wailing in the dry driving snow, Frank found a dozen more of his traps hung. He said nothing to Lute, who was driving the dogs. That was another cause of uneasiness, too. He wondered again, with a growing cynicism, what sort of a bargain he had made, and knew it was too late to back out now.

Where a feeder creek from Whitefish Lake came into the Wailing, Frank stopped again, and this time he felt his suspicion harden. The toboggan trail still clung to his own, which kept to the Wailing. A man who was up here to trap would have headed over for Whitefish and east. This man was headed for Christmas Valley.

He left the Wailing soon, where the trail took to the bush, clinging to a series of jack pine ridges that rose higher and higher. Presently, close to dark, he paused on the lip of one ridge, breathing hard from the pace he had set, and waited for Lute, a wild impatience within him.

When his big blond partner came up beside him, Frank pointed. "There's the shack below. You go ahead, and I'll take the dogs. The trail's tricky. Hurry it, man." There was impatience in his voice.

Ahead of and below them, in a deep valley tucked away in the folds of this bleak country, was the tiny black spot of a cabin in a clearing among the spruce.

It almost hugged the steep barren rock slope of the opposite side, and looked as lonely as a ship on an ocean. Frank watched Lute as he studied it briefly, and then Lute said, "It's lonesome enough all right." He turned to Frank. "Who's your caller?"

"I'm goin' to find out."

While he rigged the sled's tail rope to serve as a roughlock, Lute descended the twisting trail. The slope was not sheer, but a sled out of control could smash into a thousand pieces here. It picked its descending way by a series of hairpin turns through the stunted spruce and jackpine, until finally it flattened out, four hundred feet lower, onto the floor of Christmas Valley.

Frank was on Lute's heels as they reached the valley floor, and Frank curtly handed over the dogs to him and set out at a long trot. The trail threaded through a tall stand of timber, slipped into a stream, turned up it, followed it north, then came to a clearing by the cabin.

WHEN Frank reached the clearing, he paused again. The trail of the toboggan went right to the door of the long, low shack.

Frank ran then. He passed the front of the shack, noting the door was open, and then he halted at the corner of it, regarding an old drifted-over trail that aimed at a jut of rock in the steep slope and disappeared behind it.

This trail showed no tracks, but Frank didn't seem satisfied. He took to the trail, skirted a point and hauled up at the drifted mouth of a tunnel in the rock face of the cliff. Ten feet into that tunnel there was a heavy timbered door padlocked to a spike driven deep into the living rock. He paused there, breathing hard, and saw the padlock undisturbed. Nor were there any new marks on the ancient plank door. The intruder hadn't been here, hadn't seen it.

He heard Lute from behind him say, "What is it, Frank?"

Frank heaved a deep, shuddering sigh and brushed past Lute. "Let's see what's plundered first."

Together they went into the cabin. It was a big affair, and its main room was wider than it was deep. The north end of it was the kitchen, with a small stove and crude cabinets. The south end was the bedroom, with a table between a pair of double-tiered bunks. In the back wall was a door, for which Frank headed. It let on into another room, empty save for a work bench, a small furnace built into one corner, some retorts, some scatterings of coal, some bins of ore samples.

Frank closed the door then, and regarded the living room again. Dirty dishes littered the table, grease coagulated on them.

He cursed softly, and looked at Lute, who was regarding him with alert curiosity.

"Where's Charlie?" Lute asked.

"Trapline, probably." A sudden decision came into his voice. "Get a fire going, Lute, while I unload the sled. I'm hittin' the trail again."

He lugged the load in from the sled. In the gathering darkness, he went out to the open cache, a high rack in the

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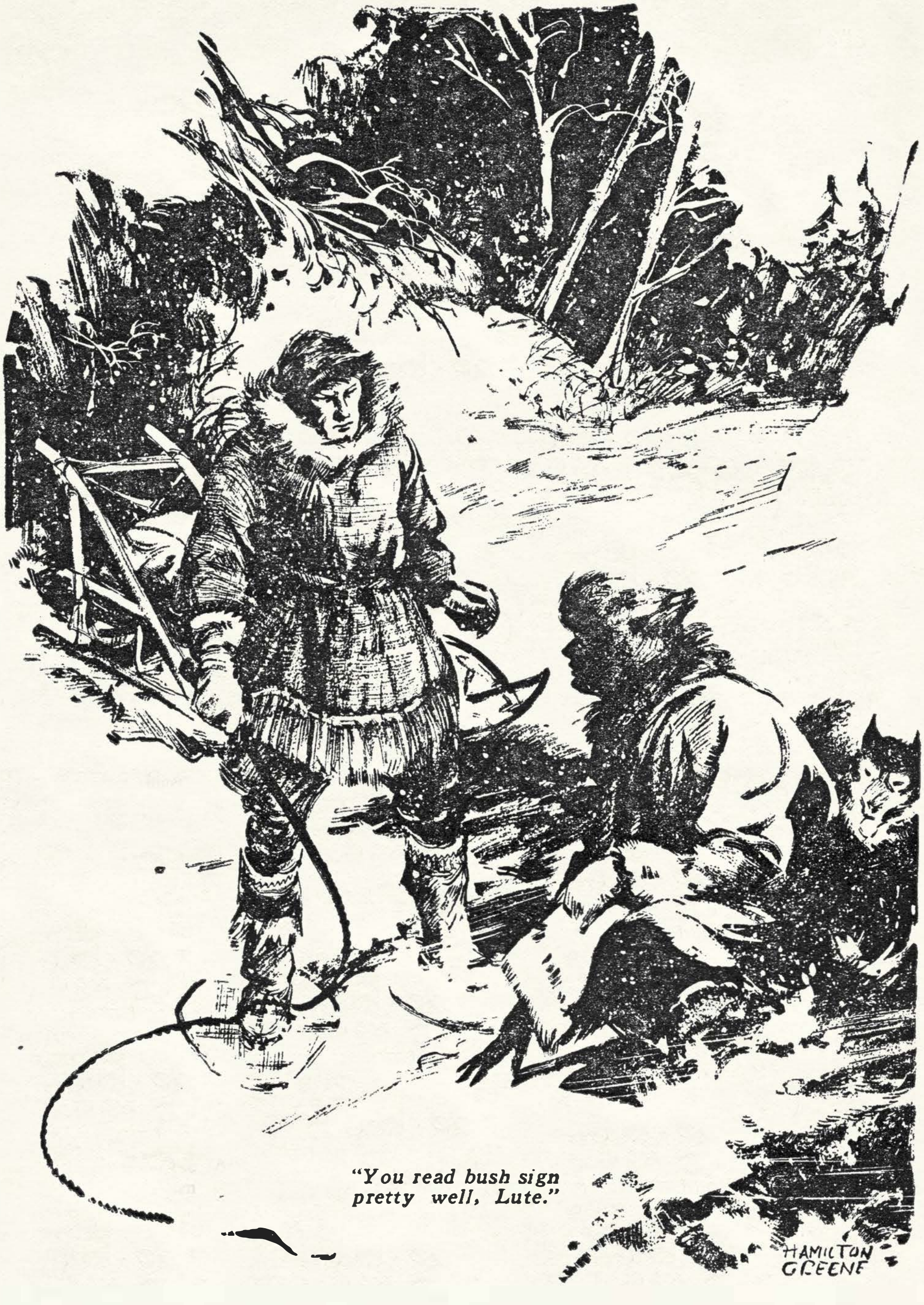


"You read bush sign pretty well, Lute."

rear of the shack out of reach of the dogs, took down a hind quarter of moose meat and threw it in the carriole. The dogs whined hungrily, waiting to be unhooked. Frank paused by the leader and said, "Not yet, boy."

He went inside then. Lute, curious but silent, had lighted the lamp, and the water was boiling. From the grub box, Frank pulled out some bannock, broke off a hunk, and then Lute put the teapot on the table. His cap and parka off, Frank, still standing, ate the half-frozen bannock and swigged the tea. The sombre look on his face had deepened. Lute watched him curiously, saying nothing.

Frank said suddenly, "Wondering what it's all about?"

"Who wouldn't?"

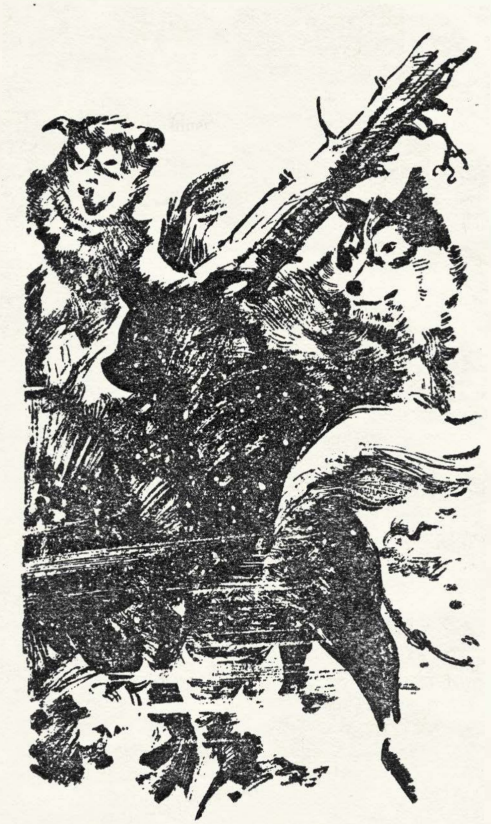
"I haven't got time for much of it," Frank said curtly. "But you'll get enough to understand." He bit off a chunk of bannock, and talked around it. "See that tunnel door I went to first?"

"It's a mine, I suppose."

"There's about a hundred thousand dollars worth of ore in sight there," Frank said calmly. Lute's eyes widened a little.

Lute said, then, "Nobody'll steal that. Why the secret?"

Frank arrested the tin cup half way to his lips, and looked levelly at Lute. "Because this isn't my claim."



For a moment, they didn't speak. Then Lute said curiously, "Claim jumping, Frank?"

"I was waiting for that," Frank said sardonically. "No, partner, I'm not claim jumping. I didn't dig that tunnel; I didn't throw up this shack. This claim and this shack and this valley were abandoned."

Lute was puzzled. "If that's so, I still don't see why you're so worried."

Frank ripped off another hunk of bannock, and talked rapidly. "Know how a claim is abandoned, Lute?"

"No."

"The law favors the original staker. He has to put in only sixty days work on a claim the first two years, and ninety the third. And what he does in one year is allowed to carry over into the second. That's what happened here—only the bird who staked it hasn't been here the third year."

"And when is this third year up?"

"Almost two months ago."

"I don't get it, then," Lute said. "You're clear to stake it, aren't you?"

"Except for a three months extension he's allowed by law, I'm clear," Frank said grimly. "The law gives him an extra three months before his claim is forfeit. If he can show sickness, or a hundred other excuses, they're all valid."

"And if he doesn't?"

"Then the recorder marks the claim cancelled, and I can step in and restake it."

Lute was silent a moment, carefully regarding Frank, who was swigging the hot tea in grim and hurried silence.

"I see," he said softly.

Frank didn't look up, but went on with his eating.

"And you're wondering who's paid you a call, because if he saw that tunnel he can tip off the original claimant—"

"He didn't see it, though," Frank cut in. "There weren't new tracks to it. But if people figure they can come in here to look me over any time they want, they will see it. And once they do, they'll tip off the original claimant and he can come back and claim the work I've done, prove there's ninety days' work in it, get his patent, and then mine a fortune out of it," Frank finished swiftly. He set his cup down and looked levelly at Lute.

"That's why I need your money, Lute," he said matter-of-factly. "The ore is free-milling. With a small crew, I can fly some out, show the assay, and the machinery company will give me all the credit I need."

Lute said curiously, "How'd you get on to this?"

Frank was pulling on his parka, and he smiled faintly at Lute's question. It was the only time Lute had seen him smile, and then it was a twisted one.

"For three damned summers," Frank said, "I waded muskeg and fought flies, prospecting this whole formation. When I came to these diggings, I saw what had happened. Up on the slope there, this prospector had found color against a porphyry-diorite dike. He figured the pay-off would be at the foot of the dike. It was a vertical dike. He came down here, put in his tunnel and found a porphyry-diorite dike. He cut upcasts and crosscuts around the foot of it, but he didn't find anything. He left the place, then, and I'll bet he wondered what had gone wrong."

"What had?"

Frank smiled again, crookedly. "He'd worked on a false dike, same formation. The dike he'd spotted up on top wasn't vertical. A hundred feet down, there was a slip, and it took a forty degree slope toward the north. He'd mistaken a false dike for the real one. When I found that, I came down to his diggings, put his tunnel on through to the real dike and found the ore body at the foot of her."

"You did that in secret?" Lute asked slowly.

FRANK picked up his mittens and cap, nodding, and then he raised his sombre gaze to Lute. "Try it sometime. Try portaging a summer's grub over the height of land and traveling at night. Try single-jackin' instead of blasting, because you're afraid of the noise. While you're at it, try hunting moose with a bow and arrow, like Charlie did, for fear of a gunshot being heard. Try doing the tail end of a summer's work on blueberries!" His eyes were hard and stirred faintly with anger. "You've been sulking, Lute, because I got tough in Lobstick when you tipped that girl off that maybe we were hiding something from Millis. Now you see why. I've worked here a whole summer and part of a winter, and nobody knew my name, except Millis. They thought I was a sorehead trapper." He finished bitterly, "I'm not playing for white chips, fella'."

Lute's heavy face flushed a little. He asked slowly, "You think she's tipped off whoever made this visit?"

"I'll find out," Frank said. He put on his cap, and then eyed Lute steadily. "Let's get this settled before I leave, Lute."

"Whatever it is, go ahead."

"In case you've got any ideas about getting word to the wrong people about this, I wouldn't." He paused, letting that sink in. "I don't know why you're hiding, Lute. I don't care. But if you talk to anyone about Christmas Valley and what's going on here, I'll turn you over to Millis. He can find out why you're hiding, and who wants you."

The muscles in Lute's jaw flicked faintly, but his eyes were steady. "That's fair enough. One thing more. If I'm turned up, Frank, I'll blow up this little mine-stealing deal for you, too."

Frank nodded grimly. "We know where we stand now, don't we?"

"Exactly."

The dogs outside started a savage barking, then, and Frank went out swiftly. He grabbed the whip from the sled, and cracked it savagely over the leader's head. The dogs stopped barking. Frank, Lute behind him, listened. They heard the brittle brushing sound of a toboggan on the snow, the pad of dogs' feet. And then, out of the darkness, a team limped into the clearing, and started barking.

A man heaved himself slowly out of the carriole, and Frank ran over to him. "What's the matter, Charlie?"

"Nothing much," Charlie said.

Lute saw only a slight man of medium size who spoke good English. Frank put Charlie's arm around his neck, helped him into the shack and seated him on the edge of the bunk. Charlie was young, his dark face broad out of all proportion to his slim body. A deep cut on his cheekbone was plastered over with balsam gum, and one eye was swelled shut. He looked searchingly at Lute from one dark eye. Frank asked, "What was it?"

"I dunno, Frank. I met a strange team on Whitefish portage. I come up so quick on them I couldn't stop my dogs. Both teams was fightin', and this breed and me pulled 'em off. Then he turned on me and beat hell out of me."

"Why?"

"I dunno. He swung a trap in my face. When I fell, he kicked me. I heard him say somethin' about teaching me to stay out of his country. He broke my gun and pulled out."

"A breed, you say?" Frank said.

"Yes."

"You all right?"

"I got some busted ribs, I think."

Frank rose. Only then did he remember Lute. He introduced them. Charlie shook hands, not smiling. Lute's manner was faintly condescending.

Then Frank said, "I'm hitting the trail, Charlie. You take it easy."

He glanced up at Lute, and Lute stepped outside with him. Frank said, "The dogs will be cut up, Lute. Have Charlie show you what to do. Tape his ribs too." He paused, and added dryly, "You haven't got a white man's burden to carry with Charlie, Lute. He's been to school. Patronize him, and I hope he shoots you."

He didn't wait for Lute's answer. He put his head in the door, said, "Was he heading across Pembina, Charlie?" and when he got Charlie's nod, he grinned and said, "So long, kid."

He checked his load. Gun, a kettle, a slab of bannock and some tea, an axe, dog feed, bed roll, and that was all. He broke the sled loose, spoke quietly to the dogs, hewed them in behind Charlie's sled, and vanished into the night up Charlie's trail, heading west up the valley.

HE traveled all that night, boiling tea twice and resting his dogs. He left Christmas Creek at the head of the valley, took Charlie's trail through two

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muskegs, over four ascending ridges, crossed the Wailing, which was now only a stream, and plunged into the long grade of tamarack scrub that put him on Whitefish before dawn.

Just as light broke, he came to where Charlie and the breed had fought on the short portage between Whitefish and Pembina lakes. Charlie had left here yesterday noon. The breed, heading across Pembina had trail to break. He would be starting about now, and that put him a half day ahead of Frank. With the breed's freshly broken trail to travel, it was a matter of a day to catch him.

The sky had cleared in the night, and morning dawned with an iron cold. He was impatient to get on, but he fought it down. His dogs needed rest. Unhooking them, he fed them lightly, then built a fire and hunkered down beside it, gnawing on a piece of bannock, scooping up snow in his mittened hand to wash it down.

The act of doing it recalled Kelcy McIvor and the strychnine on his old mittens. All this night the memory of her had been in the back of his mind, slowly building an anger and suspicion that he pondered now.

Until his meeting with her, nobody had ever bothered to investigate his camp on Christmas Creek. Somehow, this girl, through a careless word, perhaps, had whetted someone's curiosity about him. Or maybe the word wasn't so careless; maybe it was her way of fighting him. And only her breed's carelessness or haste had made him overlook the tunnel. Frank shivered when he thought of it.

Before the hour he had promised himself was up, his impatience had conquered. He hooked up the dogs and started. It was a dazzling, spotless world that he met that morning; the lake lay dead and immobile in the grip of the cold. Plumes of frost hovered over the dogs, tipping each hair with silver, and the sled squealed on the dry snow.

The trail crossed the arm of the Pembina, hugged the east shore for three miles, then turned into the bush. It held to an easterly direction, travelling the bare ridges. Frank hoped to come upon the evidence that the man had stopped to kill some game for dog-feed which would bring their meeting sooner, but he did not. Before noon, he came to the man's night camp.

After that, the trail was softer and slower. And through the afternoon to lowering dark, he dogged the man's trail.

At early dark he had still not overtaken him. The breed might have feared pursuit, but Frank doubted it. Coming to a decision, he unhooked his dogs in the cold darkness, chained them out, fed them, and then took his gun and set off alone on the frozen trail, certain that his man couldn't be far ahead.

The trail was clinging to the crest of a jackpine ridge, and in that utter darkness Frank followed it by feel. He was hungry and tired and was feeling the cold now, and the stars looked near and brittle as glass.

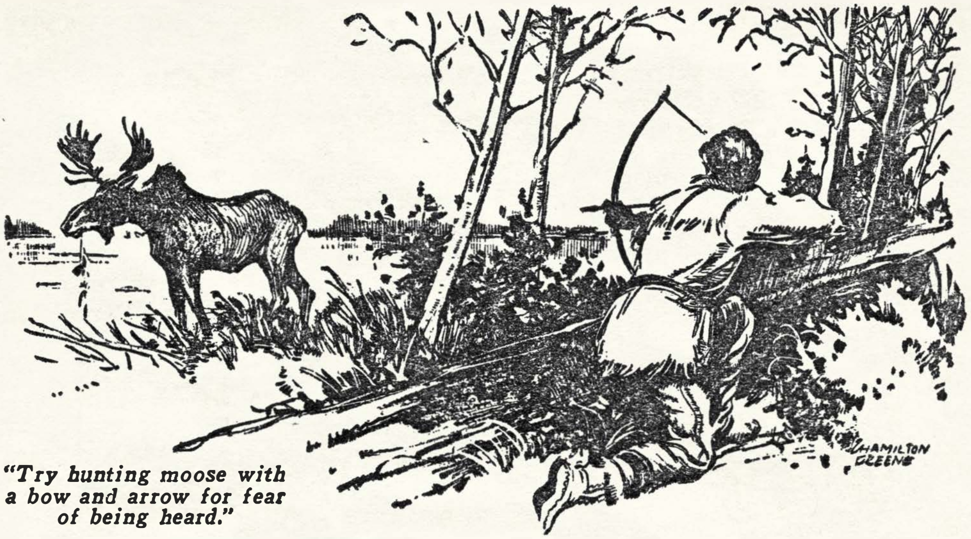
Soon, a mile from where he left the dogs, the trail tipped down into a creek. Then he saw the light of the man's fire, several hundred yards ahead. He watched it a moment, considering. He tested the wind, and there was a faint stirring of it up the creek. Approaching from this side, the dogs would catch the scent and warn the breed.

FRANK retreated up the ridge, and made a wide half mile circle that brought him to the creek above the fire. Screened now by the thickets of alders and willows, and with the deep snow to muffle his footsteps, he made his way down the creek.

And then, fifty yards or so from the fire, the creek took a turn and he was looking at the camp. The breed had a roaring fire, and Frank noted carefully that some of his fuel was jackpine, which snapped and crackled and made the night alive with sound that would cover the noise of his approach.

On three long poles rammed slanting into the snow, a tarp was stretched parallel to the fire. The breed sat on a spruce bough bed in the heat reflected from the tarp, his cap and parka off, head bent over some task. Gently, Frank approached, rifle in hand.

Coming closer, he saw that the breed was repairing a snow shoe with *babiche,*



"Try hunting moose with a bow and arrow for fear of being heard."

or rawhide, which he was softening in the remains of his tea. His dogs were tied out behind the tarp, and they were curled up now, nose in tail, fur ruffed for insulation against the night's cold, sleeping.

Calmly, Frank walked on toward the fire, gun slacked off his shoulder. Suddenly, without looking up, the breed made a grab for a gun. Frank shot over his head. The dogs boiled out of their beds, and set up a savage clamor, but they were chained and safe.

The warning shot stopped the breed. He stood up now, a thick, stocky man, and Frank walked into the circle of firelight. The breed cursed the dogs into silence, then faced Frank with a sullen, secretive expression.

Frank said mildly, "Jumpy, friend?"

The breed didn't answer, and Frank came closer to the fire, his rifle pointed at the breed. He kicked the man's rifle out into the snow, and then stood by his axe.

"Sit down," he ordered.

The breed did. Frank squatted on the edge of the spruce boughs which the breed had cut for his bed, and shoved his cap back off his forehead. His green eyes were glinting with the sharp reflections of the fire, and he felt its warmth seeping into his tired muscles.

"I been on the trail a long time," Frank drawled. "I miss the company. Tell me a story."

Still the breed didn't answer. Frank said in a low hard voice, "You turned my shack upside down. Why?"

"I was out of grub," the breed said sullenly.

"You're a liar. I followed you out from Lobstick."

The breed said nothing.

"You tied into my partner yesterday. That because you were out of grub too?"

"He tried to kill my dogs."

"So you hit him in the face with a trap."

"That's a lie! He fell on a windfall!"

Frank said curiously, "Who sent you up this way?"

"It's my trap line," the breed answered. "I've trapped the Wailing for ten years."

"Do you always start trappin' in the middle of the winter?" Frank drawled.

The breed shrugged, his dark eyes quiet and watchful.

Frank regarded him thoughtfully for a moment, and he could see the quiet sneering confidence in the man. It angered him, and puzzled him too. The breed had hung his traps, rifled his shack, beat up Charlie, and now seemed doubtful if anything would happen to him.

Frank came to his feet.

"Go over and haul your sled over here

and throw it on the fire," he ordered crisply.

The breed's face changed, but he did not move. Frank swung his rifle up, levered a fresh shell into it and waited. Slowly, the breed came to his feet. "What you goin' to do?"

"I'm goin' to burn your sled and your harness and your grub," Frank said slowly. "That's the only kind of talk you understand."

There was fear in the breed's eyes now, but he didn't move. Frank said softly, "Hurry it up."

The breed walked around the fire to the sled, which was turned upside down. He righted it, sullenly threw the harness in it, then lifted its nose around until it pointed to the fire, and dragged it over.

He paused, with the sled's nose on a burning log, and went around to the handlebars as if to lift it on the fire. Instead, he shoved viciously. Propped up by the log, the sled drove across the fire into Frank's side, and the weight of it knocked him down. The breed leaped through the fire and landed on him, driving the wind from him.

The breed slugged wildly at his face, and Frank brought his arms up in protection, dropping the gun. This was what the breed had been counting on. He rolled off Frank, lunging for the gun. Frank came over on his side, grabbed the breed by the shoulder and held him, and with the other hand reached for the gun. They lay there side by side, fighting to reach it, the breed kicking wildly.

SUDDENLY, Frank let go. The breed reached the rifle, and then Frank lunged on him. The breed heaved himself to his knees, Frank on his back, and swung the gun, butt foremost, over his shoulder. It caught Frank in the neck and he was knocked backward. And then the breed heaved himself to his feet. Frank scrambled up, swinging savagely. His blow caught the breed flush behind the ear, and he staggered and fell. The gun slipped out of his hands into the snow and disappeared.

He came to his feet in time to meet Frank's rush. They stood there, knee deep in the snow, slugging wildly at each other, the breed grim and silent. The dogs were raising a bedlam of fury, straining at their chains, lips curled over teeth in a slavering fury.

Frank kept crowding the breed back, and then he beat the man's guard down and drove a smashing blow into his face that slipped on the man's teeth and tore his lip. The breed fell, and then reached for something in the snow. He came to his knees, a tamarack club in his hand. Frank went for him, and the breed swung the club. It caught Frank on the shoulder and sent him rolling into the snow at the feet of a dog.

He felt the dog slash at him, heard his parka hood rip, and then he saw the breed run for the fire and the axe. Frank rose and ran too, and left his feet in a long dive at the breed's back. They both landed in the middle of the roaring fire. Frank rolled away, and the breed, yelling with pain, clawed his way out of the fire to the pile of dry logs that he had dragged up for fuel. Some dogged instinct had made him keep the axe, and now he came to his feet in the uncertain footing of the logs.

Frank lunged at him, pinning his arms to his side, and the impact of his rush took them over backwards. Suddenly, the breed screamed with pain, and they hit the snow.

The breed lay there, moaning, and Frank came off him, dragging in great shuddering breaths of the bitter air. And then Frank saw what had happened.

The breed's leg had become wedged down among the heavy logs, and when Frank slammed into him, carrying them both down, the breed's leg had broken.

Frank lifted off the log, then sank to his knees, exhausted, his head hung with weariness. Presently, the breed's moans roused him, and he looked up. The man's leg was twisted awkwardly, and he moved his head from side to side with the pain.

Frank grasped him by the shoulders and dragged him over upon the spruce bed, then threw two logs on the fire. He was shaking with weariness, and hunger was gnawing at his belly. His face felt smashed. The dogs, silent now, were standing alertly, waiting for the next move of this strange drama.

The breed was quiet, but his bruised face was gray with pain, and all the wickedness had gone out of his dark eyes.

He asked calmly, "You goin' to leave me now?"

"I ought to," Frank answered harshly.

"You can't do that," the breed said quietly.

Frank knelt by him, fighting down his pity. He said curtly, "It's time to talk, mister. Who sent you up to me?"

"Nobody. I just come," the man answered through clamped teeth. His eyes were stubborn, and Frank knew he wouldn't talk. The breed was certain that Frank wouldn't desert him, wouldn't deny him help; it was a code that all men obeyed in this country, one that he would have obeyed himself. And knowing it, he wouldn't talk.

Frank came to his feet unsteadily. He was too weary to derive much satisfaction out of the fact that he'd taught a snooper a lesson. It was an expensive lesson for them both, for he would have to take the man back to Lobstick.

WITH a dead weariness, Frank set about doing what he knew he would have to do. He split out two splints with the axe, then reached in his belt for his hunting knife. Somewhere in the brawl, it had slipped out of its sheath. The breed, watching him, said, "Mine's over there," indicating the bedroll.

Frank went over to where the bedroll and grub box and duffle sack were. He picked up the duffle sack, and the breed said sharply, "It's a knife you want, ain't it? It's in the grub-box."

Frank looked up swiftly, suspicious at the urgency in the man's voice. Then he deliberately opened the draw string of the duffle sack and dumped out its contents. Beside the change of moccasins and socks, the sewing kit, the rolled *babiche,* there was something else there in a deer hide sack. He picked it up and looked at the breed. The man's eyes were dark and wicked with hate.

Frank opened the sack, and shook out a small bottle filled with white powder.

Slowly, a thin smile broke Frank's gaunt, bruised face, and he picked up the bottle and came over to the breed. "Nice stuff," he murmured. "It does a quick job, doesn't it?"

The breed didn't say anything.

"I'll keep this," Frank went on. "If you figure to horn in on my line again and loot my shack, you better think twice. Millis would like to see this strychnine. You get it?"

Still the breed didn't answer. Frank pocketed the strychnine.

"Something else, too," he said quietly. "Tell your pals to stay away from me—clear away. If they don't you'll wind up behind bars, along with Bruce McIvor, the guy that sold it to you."

The breed nodded.

Frank remembered Kelcy McIvor's words: "I'll make him destroy it—all of it." He wondered if she had even tried. And he wondered, too, at the courage of the girl. If she was seeking some evidence against him to cancel out his evidence against her brother, she was playing a tougher game than she knew. And she'd almost succeeded.

CHAPTER IV

ARMED TRUCE

IT was a strange sight when Frank, more gaunt and black-bearded than ever, pulled into Lobstick five days later. The breed, in a high fever, lay in the carriole, and two teams, eleven dogs in tandem, pulled him. It had been five days of hell—five days of breaking trail, of hunting dog feed each night because he couldn't carry it, and of stopping a half dozen times a day to heat rocks so that the breed's leg would not freeze in the iron cold that gripped the land.

At dusk that afternoon, he left the breed at Lobstick's hospital, which consisted of five beds on the glassed-in porch of the doctor's residence. His next move was to hunt up Millis. He found him at his office in the rear of his trim white and green house behind a picket fence on a back road of Lobstick.

The lamp in Millis' office was lighted against the deepening dusk. When he answered Frank's knock, Frank stepped into a small room, benches lining two walls, a desk and chair in the center of the room and a tiny single jail cell of four by four timbers in the rear corner opposite a stove.

Millis had been doing paper work. He pulled off his reading glasses and shook hands with Frank, motioning him to a bench. Frank was weary to the bone, dead for sleep, but he knew he must take this insurance.

"I just left a breed with a broken leg over at the hospital," he said. "I thought you might want to know."

Millis' brown tunic fitted his shoulders trimly; sitting there, he looked more benevolent than stern, yet his eyes, mild and watchful, missed nothing.

"Who was he?"

"Joe McKenzie. I broke his leg, I'm afraid."

Millis was politely silent. Frank told him of following the breed's trail up the Wailing, and of discovering that his traps were jerked, of the house turned inside out, and of Charlie's brush with him. Frank framed his story cleverly, making it seem that his resentment stemmed from the fact that his traps were hung and his line was trespassed upon.

He finished, "I overtook him at night. I warned him off my line, and he got tough, claiming he'd trapped the Wailing for ten years. Has he?"

"No. Then what?"

"Words led to blows. We slugged it out until he took to his axe. I piled into him, then, but his foot was jammed in some windfalls he'd dragged up for the fire. The fall broke his leg."

"And you brought him back?" Millis asked. Frank nodded.

Millis tilted back in his chair and said obliquely, carelessly, "That's too bad—too bad for you, too, Nearing."

"I don't see it."

"Don't get me wrong," Millis drawled. "I'm not blaming you for what you did. Chances are, Joe won't make a complaint, and I wouldn't listen to him if he did. He's slippery, and knows enough to stay away from me. I didn't mean it that way."

"How did you?"

Millis scrubbed his jaw with the palm of his hand, and looked searchingly at Frank. "You know," he said, "we police mind our own business pretty well. We never ask questions. If a man is trying to forget his past and build on the future, we let him alone. But strangely enough, other people haven't got our tolerance."

Frank scowled, not understanding.

"You're a stranger here," Millis went on. "You've been here six months. Outside of myself, you haven't spoken to a soul, have you?"

"No."

Millis nodded. 'That's what I mean. Nearing, people don't like mysteries." He brought his chair down and put his elbows on the desk. "I'll bet money that Joe McKenzie did this to you out of curiosity."

"You think so?"

Millis nodded and smiled faintly. "Take a tip from me, while I'm not minding my own business. Be a little more friendly. You can have a drink with a man and still beat hell out of him if he crowds you." He paused, and said then, "You know, people are beginning to think you're inventing a death ray or something up in Christmas Valley."

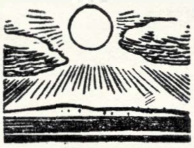
Frank forced a smile. "All I'm trying to invent is money enough out of my winter and spring hunt to grubstake me for a prospect next summer."

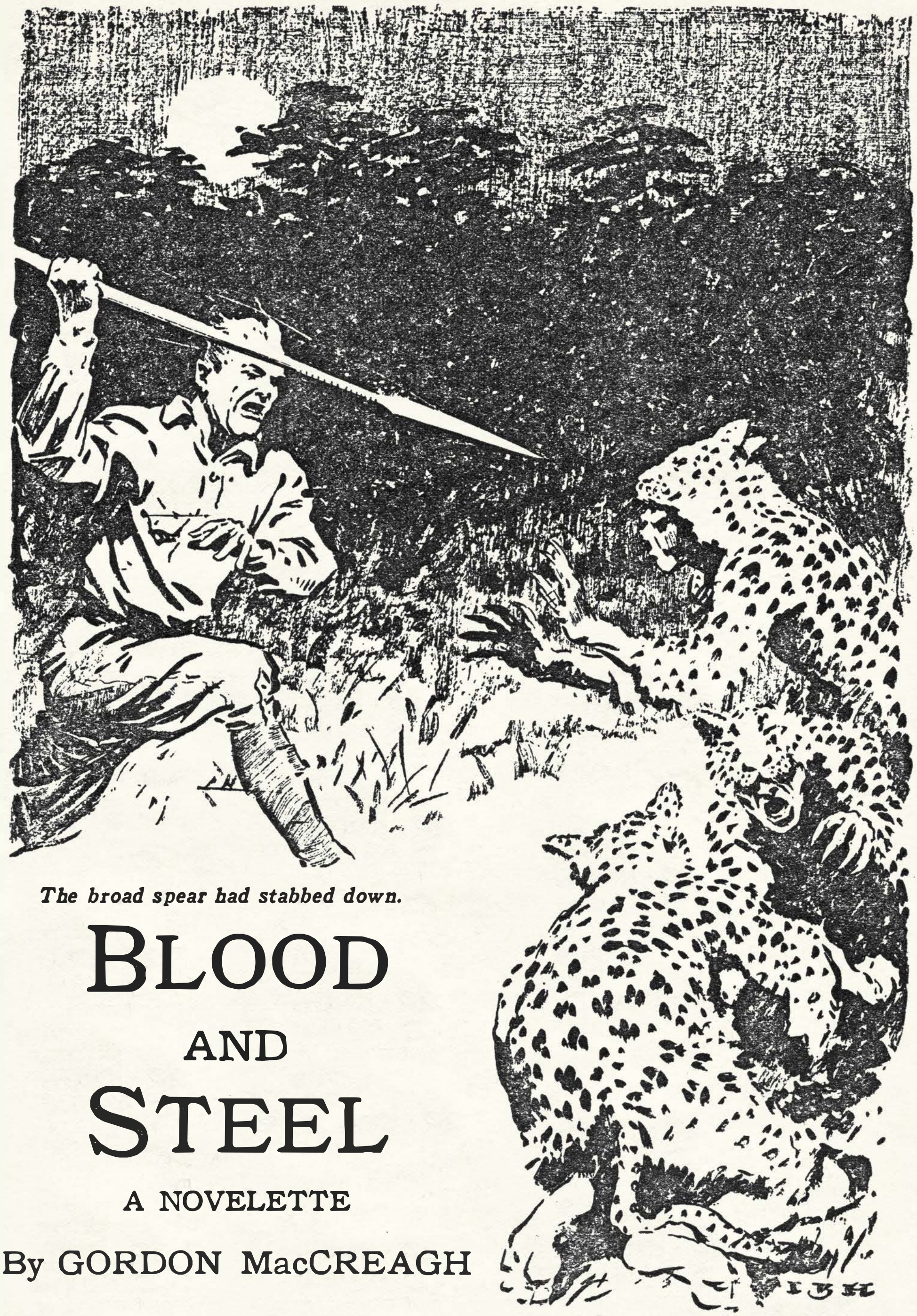
"Tell 'em that," Millis said. "That's all they want to know."

Frank rose and said, "Thanks, Millis. Am I clear in this?"

"Seem to be. I'll get Joe's story tonight. If it doesn't jibe with yours, I think I'll take your version. You can leave his dogs here."

(to be continued)





The broad spear had stabbed down.

BLOOD AND STEEL

A NOVELETTE

By GORDON MacCREAGH

KING, trader, white hunter, and thorn in the side of many foolish people, pushed his tawny head up over the steep lip of the donga and paused with instinctive and quite unconscious caution to let his narrowed eyes first take a survey of every thing that moved on the plain.

"Anything—" It was an unshakable slogan of his—"can happen in Africa."

And Kingi Bwana of the wide experience was just now being careful.

The thing that was happening a scant mile away was a startling verification of even so all embracing a slogan. What moved on the plain, a black dot in the distance still, was the most vicious live thing in Africa, and its quarry was a white man.

King heaved the rest of his sinewy length over the donga's edge and stood up, the better to see, while he sibilated the bitter Swahili proverb with his sharply drawn breath.

"The broken spear is needed a hundred times daily."

That was why King had been traveling along the bottom of the donga instead of wide open and don't-give-a-damn on the plain—because his weapon, his rifle, was broken.

He was climbing out of the donga because its precipitous sides were pinching in on him and he could see, only a hundred yards ahead, where a cascade of shale rubble marked the sudden narrow beginning of the erosion gully.

King turned his head for a moment from the desperate race that thudded over the plain to call down the donga's depth: "Up, there! Quick and look!"

A Masai ostrich plume bobbed up; brawny limbs sprawled over the edge. The man reached a hand down and with a single long swing slung out of the depths a wizened little Hottentot who landed with simian agility on his feet and immediately hopped high again in excitement and shrilled a call, for all the world like a grass monkey.

The Masai stood to his height and looked. He exclaimed, "*Whau!*" Immediately then his iron calm asserted itself and he viewed the racing drama of life and death with impartial criticism.

"*Kifaru* pursues furiously, for, see his tail, he is much enraged; and I think indeed he will catch that moto car, for the driver is inexpert over this grass land."

King pulled his pith helmet low over his eyes to cut the upper glare and frowned narrowly at the advancing spectacle. For the moment the car was holding its own; a none too new model, it clangored and roared its laboring best. Behind it pounded the rhinoceros, nearly as big and quite as heavy and virulently more destructive than a car at its worst, snorting and blowing almost as loud.

AT that, steel and machinery ought to have outrun flesh and bone; only that the driver was woefully inexperienced over that kind of terrain. The car lurched over high tussocks of the stiff bunch grass, swayed drunkenly into the in-between depressions, jarred into clumps that visibly checked it before it could roar again to its pick-up. The thundering brute behind, born to that ground, was gaining.

"Tch-sha-a-ah!" King exhaled his impotent aggravation. Hard-boiled he was and attuned to African grimness, but his white man sensibilities had never learned to equal the Masai's African impersonality. "Why can't he pick the soft spots? Crack an axle or dish a wheel—any least thing happen, he'll be mush. That brute will knock his machine apart like a bomb and trample him out all sticky."

His hands with automatic habit inched up to the ready position for snapping gun to shoulder. Then he swore helplessly and let them drop. "And not a gun within a hundred miles!"

The driver saw the three human figures outlined against the farther heat haze. Humans, therefore human aid! The impulse was instinctive. He wrenched desperately at his wheel and headed directly for them.

And King—perhaps *the* man in all Africa most sure of stopping a charging rhino—weaponless! That was the grim humor of Africa.

"Wo-we!" The big Masai spat calmly. "The fool's fate reaches its appointed end. He will never see this donga in time and will plunge to the depth."

"Having first lured destruction upon all of us." The Hottentot danced and chattered abuse. "From a fool can his foolishness not be beaten with sticks." The proverb was amazingly like one recorded into Holy Writ by a man much wiser than he.

King jumped high, waved his arms and pointed wide sweeping gestures over to his right, beyond where the donga began its abrupt course.

The driver, fool though they all named him, retained sense enough in his extremity to understand the obvious signal. He wrenched his wheel over again and the car shuddered on in its altered career.

"Yet *Kifaru* will surely catch him," the Masai said, as callously as a white man watching greyhounds course a hare. The course paralleled them now—the car careened some two hundred yards away; the remorseless rhino pounded seventy yards behind.

"He avoids the new danger," said the Masai, "only to be overtaken by the old."

Much of the grief that came to King in Africa was because he was just not hard-boiled enough to stay out of trouble that was not strictly his own.

"Not so," he said quickly to the Masai. "For you can still divert *Kifaru* and haply snatch that man's life from his fate."

"*Wah, Bwana!*" The Masai's exclamation was one that could indicate surprise, or with almost the same intonation, indignation. His long oblique eyes judged distances as critically as they counted the chances of the grim race. "It might indeed be done, *Bwana*. But the life of a fool, is it worthy of the risk?"

It was quite impossible to drag eyes away from that race. King grated words only out of the corner of his mouth to his henchman.

"It is not an order, for death rides close on that play. Yet I would count it a favor."

"*Veme!*" The Masai shrugged further argument from his great shoulders. "Death and I have played many times together. I go."

"To this side of the donga," King called after him. "That the car may escape beyond."

THE Masai ran with the swallow-like gliding motion of long limbed men whose legs are well muscled under their weight; his black ostrich plumes flattened back in the wind, the colobus monkey tail garters at his elbows and knees flickering like whips; his spear extended, he shouted as he ran the hoarse "*Ss-sghee*" of the Masai charge. A superb figure of savage daring.

"Ow-woo!" the Hottentot moaned. "All for a man who is a fool."

King knew to exactness what the Masai dared. He stood on wide-spread legs, his thumbs in his belt, twisting till the stout leather creaked.

The Masai raced on a diagonal slant to get between car and pursuing beast. The grass was as high as his knees, yet his feet seemed to skim the flattened tops.

"Ha!" It crackled from King. "He's cut the brute off!" An astounding term to apply to two hundred pounds of man opposed to two tons of furious beast. Yet there was the Masai leaping high and yelling full and fair in its path.

The death that he so familiarly scouted rode now on the chances of how soon the short-sighted brute might see him.

"The wind at least blows from him to it," the Hottentot moaned.

And it was scent, probably, rather than sight that checked the beast's charge. It lurched suddenly to a stop. Its lowered head, long aimed at the car, flung up; its hair-fringed ears twitched; its little red-brown eyes peered to follow its nose. The horn of it stood up against the sky like a dark yard of threatening sword.

The Masai flung arms and legs wide to the air and leaped before it, yelling. A bare thirty paces before it, but enough.

"Ha!" It came dry and harsh from King again. "He's done it! Good man! Get ready, Apeling, to scramble down faster than ever you came up."

The rhino's insensate rage was immediately diverted to this new annoyance that pranced before it. It snorted a staccato succession of small explosions, down-horned again and lumbered forward to obliterate the annoyance.

A cool man with steel nerves, armed with a rifle, could then have fired over the tip of the horn into the brute's brain. A desperate man with steel spring sinews, armed with only a spear and having no other recourse, might possibly have dodged aside and driven his blade into the comparatively soft skin under the beast's foreleg. A skilled and very powerful spearman might—just barely possibly—have so killed it. The thing had been done in Africa.

The Masai, haply, was not that desperate. The donga was his better recourse. He yelled once again and turned and sped back, winging over the grass tops like a dark swooping bird, the darker mass of snorting hate behind him.

"Ha!" said King. "He's safe!" He was all unconscious of the enormity of applying the term to the appalling circumstance. "Down you go, little ape, and up the other side fast, lest the beast sees the donga no better than the car and crashes down on us."

The Hottentot was already scuttling down. King swung his legs over, felt for toe holds, found root grips, reached the bottom with an avalanche of red clay dirt. He sprang across and was nearly to the top on the other side when he heard the hard pad-pad of the Masai's feet. Then he saw him.

Like a great dark bird again. Arms wide, garter fringes flapping, legs drawn high to his belly, sailing over. All of an eighteen foot leap. Nothing for an athlete taking off from a hard packed surface with a white line to mark the spot; but from the uneven lip of a ravine a very nice little job of jumping.

Then he saw the rhino, appallingly close and monstrous, looming black like a locomotive. Saw it suddenly stiffen its squat forelegs; saw the horny great pads of its feet plow twin deep furrows in the soil that immediately hid it in red dust as thick as the swirling haze of his own hurried passage across the donga.

He listened, rather than looked, for the shuddering impact of four thousand pounds on the donga's bottom. The moment passed. No impact came. Then he looked to see that his Hottentot was safe.

Safe enough and vociferous. The little man danced on the ravine lip in vituperative derision, waiting only for the dust to float clear enough for his triumph of safety. He prepared himself by tearing clods of earthy sod from the ground and chattering curses that there were no stones.

The dust thinned. The great brute looked at the chasm before it and blew vast breaths of steam. It tossed its head in perplexity, suddenly very much like a horse in its reactions.

The Hottentot spat on a clod of turf. "This, Black One, is my blessing," he shouted and flung it to powder off the beast's armor plated side.

The beast muttered explosively and kicked forward with its great toes.

"This, O offal of cave spirits," the Hottentot yelled again, "is the blessing of my father and of all his forty-three children."

The clod shattered over the beast's face. It drove its great horn deep into the ground and plowed barrow loads of turf at a time; it stamped upon them, squealing.

The Hottentot spat upon each succeeding clod in the copied Masai custom of imparting blessing. "This, pig with a diseased nose, is the well wishing of my whole tribe."

The Masai stood in immense dignity. He said. "Look, *Bwana*. It is no wonder that the beast is enraged."

King looked at it with a thin frown. "Poor devil."

From its left shoulder protruded the broken haft of a spear, fixed there because the blade must have turned on itself like an iron claw.

"The man," said the Masai impassively, "was a brave one and the stroke almost in the exact spot; though were it I, I would have aimed a shade forward. A pity that the steel was not worthy of the man."

King shook his head. "A pity it is that so much shoddy material gets traded around to naked men who have a man's courage but the sense of children. That man's village will be one for the trader to keep away from, if he wants to keep on living."

And then at last he had time to remember the Masai's superb stunt.

"It was well done, Barounggo. A man's deed. It will be remembered. That man's life you surely saved to be counted against the many you have taken."

"*Whau, Bwana!*" The Masai's viewpoint was extraordinarily practical. "It remains yet to be seen whether the saving was worth the man."

ABOVE the snorting and raging of the rhinoceros before them came the snorting and clanking of the car from behind. All three men turned appraising eyes upon the occupant, whom they knew so far only as a man lamentably unfamiliar with that country.

"At least," the Masai said, "his limbs are not stiffened with fear of the death that followed."

The car clattered to a stand. The man in it leaned out to show a square face young and ruddy with the frost chapping of England's winter. Whether he grinned out of one side of his mouth or whether the distortion was caused by a monocle that lifted that half of his face was not clear. He said:

"The brute's pretty demmed shirty, what?"

King looked him over with a face as expressionless as though it was hewn out of hard-grained wood. He was never one to expand to a meaningless smile upon the mere approach of another white man, and anger he never let an enemy see. He said:

"Shirty, as you say, and then some."

"Come jolly near to getting me, too." The young man shivered a little.

"And still might," King said. "Come along—keep moving down donga. It'll be twenty miles before it'll flatten out enough for any rhino to get across, and with any luck it'll be too dumb to go around the upper end. Keep slinging mud at Kifaru, Kaffa, and lure him along a ways."

"By Jove!" The young man showed alarm. "D'you really think, old man, it might get it into its head to come round?"

"It could. Anything can happen if the gods of Africa decide they don't want somebody on their landscape. Keep moving."

The car lurched along. On the other side of the donga, so close that you could see the hate in its little pig eyes, the rhino paralleled it, kicking huge divots of sod at intervals, slashing its horn through the earth with a grunt and a vast heave.

The destructive potentiality of the thing was appalling.

"By Jove!" The man showed anxiety. "What that would do to a car!"

"Don't worry," King reassured him. "If it decided to come around the short end we'd just climb down and up the other side again. But you'd sure see a nice fast job of car wrecking."

The man positively shuddered alarm. "But that's just it. I dashed well can't afford to have him wreck my car."

"Oh," said King. "The car?" King's face indicated that whatever the fellow's other shortcomings, he was not to be condemned for cold feet. "Well, keep it moving," he said. "We'll be edging away in a while and let the brute forget us."

The maneuver was simple enough. Lured along beyond all chance of remembering that the car of its original hate must have found a way available to itself, the brute still tossed dust in the distance and nursed an abiding rage that forgot all immediate cause but remained ready to destroy immediately anything else that it might see.

"By the way," the young man shouted, "my name's Ponsonby."

King flicked a hand in acknowledgment.

"King," he shouted back.

The name meant nothing to Ponsonby. The fact was an indication that he knew nothing at all about British East Africa. Out of which the mystery remained—what in the name of all that was harebrained was he doing there alone in his ignorance? King stalked on; he was not interested enough in any Ponsonby to ask.

Ponsonby broke another clanking silence. "I say, old man. That was awf'ly sporting, what?"

"What?" King shouted back.

"I mean this big Johnny of yours with the spear. Most sporting thing a fellow ever saw—I kept looking back, you know. I've an idea the fellow saved my life."

"He did." King smiled briefly. "The two of them behind us are debating now whether the saving was worth while."

"Oh, I say! Come now!" Ponsonby's wide eyes let go of his monocle. It was only after a long rattling period that he was able to shout, "Rum beggars, these Africans."

KING stalked on, uncompromising, his eyes searching the uneven plain for a place to camp. He picked the most uncomfortable spot in a radius of three miles, a low *kloof*, a rocky outcrop of tumbled great boulders. "Where rhino's don't come charging along," was his laconic explanation. But he added, "Your car, not moving, will be safe.

"Dry camp and tight belts," he said casually. "Unless, that is, you're heeled."

"You mean, tucker, old man? Why certainly. I'm er—equipped, if that's what you mean. But—" Ponsonby had a more urgent matter on his mind—"this chappie of yours. I'm obliged to him no end. I don't suppose I could offer to pay him, could I? What I mean, looks like a sort of a gentleman, if you know what I mean."

King's appraisal of Ponsonby's shortcomings allowed his lips to crack to a visible grin. "I give you credit for perception," he said, but Ponsonby didn't know what he meant. "But you might say 'thank you'. And they're practical folks, Africans; a small gift would show you meant it."

"Certainly. Least I could do." Ponsonby ran to his car and came back with a shiny new *panga,* a machete sort of knife that East Africans use for just about every purpose from whittling toothpicks to building a house.

Barounggo accepted it gravely.

"Tell the white man it is a great gift for a small service," he said formally, but while he said it he was holding it suspended below the wooden grip. He applied his thumb nail to the edge and snapped away to test its ring. The blade gave out a dull *pung* instead of the clear, vibrating *ping-g-g,* that is prized. "But tell him," the Masai said with uncompromising African practicality, "that the steel is worthless."

King spared Ponsonby a literal translation of that. But he credited him with the appreciative thought behind the gift. He was interested enough at last in Ponsonby to ask:

"How come you tangled with that rhino?"

"How did *I*—" Ponsonby was all injured innocence. "I wasn't doing a thing. Pon my word, I was just chugging peacefully along when suddenly the thing exploded out of the ground like a bally mine and came for me."

King nodded understanding.

"Yes, they look just like ant hills when they're lying down; takes an experienced eye to spot 'em. And they'll charge anything that moves when they're mad, and this one's carrying plenty of mad cause with him. I'd just about bet it was the same one that winded my camp last night and hit it like a hurricane. Among most everything else it stepped on my rifle." King's wide mouth twisted. "Which is why you see me as helpless as a toad."

"But if you need a rifle, I've got one in my car!"

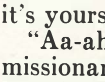
"You got a—" King's whole expression altered, lifted out of its dour dissatisfaction to the hope of a straitened swimmer who sees the straw.

"Why, certainly, old fellow." Ponsonby's generous impulses seemed to be without limit. "If you can use a rifle—Wait a sec. I'll go get it."

Ponsonby returned from his car, beaming. He handed King a shiny new weapon, the oil of its first packing not wiped from it. "If you know how to use it, it's yours."

"Aa-ah!" King reached for it like a missionary for his bible. He turned it over in his hands and drew the bolt. He end-for-ended it and squinted through the barrel and—"Yes," he said. "It *is* a rifle. But—" His white man inhibitions deterred him from putting into words the Masai's outspoken comment about the *panga* knife. He turned the sentence. "But, having even this, when the rhino came for you, why the hell didn't you haul off and stop it? The thing's one of your heavy British five-o-seven's. You could at least have discouraged the brute."

"You mean—" Ponsonby stared at him, "You mean I should have stopped my car and—" the thought was too bizarre for words.



KING laid the gun down. And Africa picked that moment for another display of humor. The sun dipped to throw long spiky shadows of the rocky outcrops that broke the plain; and, as it might have been some intercepted ray device that actuated machinery, a rumbling grumble reverberated in the air. It had a peculiar quality of not loudness so much as an all pervading volume that drummed in the ears. As it swelled, other rumbles took up the signal from other rocky *kloofs* till the whole atmosphere vibrated to grumbling summer thunder out of which boomed the punctuations of coughing belly roars.

King was watching Ponsonby from under his lowered hat brim. He had watched all kinds of reactions to the first hearing of that African choir in an open auditorium. Ponsonby was watching King, absurdly quizzical with the monocular distortion of half his face. He said only,

"What do we do now?"

"What would you have done if you'd been in your car alone?"

"I'd have turned up the windows and sat tight." Ponsonby repeated it as a lesson. "They told me that lions didn't know enough to break in."

"There's a Hottentot proverb," said King. "The gods give either guts or sense."

"Meaning what?" Ponsonby was not attuned to native turns of thought.

"Meaning Englishmen." But King's interest in Ponsonby was now sufficient to ask: "Will you tell me what you're doing in this far end of nowhere without a keeper?"

Ponsonby was not offended. His indignation was directed, rather, at another cause. "Damn it, I tried to. I wanted to get a white hunter to guide me out, but d'you know what those brigands charge?"

King nodded. "A hundred pounds a month and expenses."

"Why, it's sheer banditry!"

King was not offended either. "Um-hm. But a white hunter often enough brings his babe out of the woods alive, and that's a chore that I know the worth of as well as anybody."

"You mean you're a white hunter?" Ponsonby was all eager excitement.

"Um-hm. There's been times when I've taken folks out—and brought 'em back."

"Why, then you could guide me to—" Ponsonby's eagerness chilled away to a blankness that dropped his monocle again.

"I say, old chap! No offense, you know. I mean, about fees and all that."

"No, no offense," said King. "I'm not hiring out anyway. I'm on my way into Entoto, nearest point where I can buy me a decent gun and be a man again, and nothing is stopping me. Only I'm more amazed about you than anything that's happened in a long while. It's none of my business, except that it's my business to understand the why of things in Africa. So will you tell me why? You're not hunting; you're not photographing. Is it maybe that you—but no; you're not writing. Will you tell me then why you want to be guided by the hand through the back reaches of Africa?"

Ponsonby's candor was quite un-British and engaging, but his explanation still made no better sense than any of the rest of him. "Well, you see, I was about to be dismissed from my job; so, sinee the emoluments were considerable, I had to put the old bean to work to find out why, and here I am."

"Just as simple as that." King remained patient. "You were going to get fired, judging by your complexion, out of a good job in England, so you came to Africa and got lost."

Ponsonby drew in a long breath of patience. "It's really all quite simple. I was—I still am, I suppose—export manager for a firm of steel manufacturers and our business has been falling off no end."

"So you came to the middle of Africa?"

"Yes, of course. To find out why these dashed trader blighters wouldn't carry our line of produce."

A wary, alert look like a leopard's came into King's eyes, but he grinned at the discomfiture he was about to produce.

"There's times, in between of guiding greenhorns, that I've been called all kinds of a Yankee trader myself."

"You are?" Ponsonby's eager enthusiasm suffused him again. "Why, then you're the very man I want to meet. You can—" Surging realization loosened his monocle again to drop with his jaw.

"I say, old man! Seems I put my foot into it every time."

King still grinned. "I'm not even trading. I'm on my way shortest cut to Entoto."

CHAPTER II

BLOOD DEBT

THE Hottentot came and arranged sticks for the beginning of a fire. A short distance off the Masai was hacking at dry thorn scrub with the new *panga* and pausing at every few strokes to see whether its edge held. King gave the Hottentot camp instructions.

"A couple of fires will be enough for tonight. If Simba should come, I suppose this thing—" He pointed distastefully at the new rifle—"will suffice for close range." He added an explanation to Ponsonby. "No need for a thorn *boma* tonight, though this kind of rock outcrop country is a wasps' nest of 'em. But zebra and wildebeeste are plentiful and lions prefer them to us. Anything comes around tonight will be sheer damn cat curiosity, unless there's one of 'em mad about something."

"My word!" Ponsonby stared at him. "You fellows take them pretty casual."

King laughed at the incongruity. "Listen who's talking. You sell trade hardware, so you came out with a car, just like you'd take a turn of your midland towns in little old Blighty, to look over your territory in Africa?"

"Dash it all, man, I had to find out. The job's too good to lose."

"Whom d'you sell for?"

"Braun and Wendel. And all my samples and literature are in my car. So don't you see—" Ponsonby broke off at the sudden change in King's face. His jaw sagged as though the name had in some manner offered offense.

King's grin was taking its long time in contracting out of his lips, as a man who has been shot vitally may die with a death grin on his face. But King's eyes had already gone hard and had stared through Ponsonby and out into vistas that lay beyond the horizon of view. Ponsonby felt for his monocle, polished it without ever removing his transfixed gaze from King's, tried mechanically to twist it into his eye, from which, unsupported, it fell. He kept repeating the process while King still stared through him.

King's voice came at last; there was accusation in it.

"D'you know anything about steel?"

"Er, no," Ponsonby said. His voice had lost its buoyant enthusiasm. "No, I'm not a technician, just on the sales promotion end."

King grunted. "Well, then, let me tell you something about steel. I'm no technician either; I'm just a trader. But I'll tell you this—"

King, squatting there on a low rock, earth-stained, a little ragged, with the African dusk falling about him, loomed like some earnest exponent of a great religion delivering a world truth.

"Steel means *life!*"

The dictum delivered, he brooded over it, scowling into the gloom. Kaffa the Hottentot came and lit the camp-fire. Immediately the outer dusk that had merged tawny forms invisible into their background of tumbled boulders was punctuated by the reflections of great twin orbs that blinked and went out and opened to stare glassy green again. Kaffa shouted and threw burning sticks. The eyes blinked away and were silently gone.

King brooded on.

"In Africa, a man lives or dies by the quality of his steel."

King squatted silhouetted against the last copper glow of the dusk. Ponsonby sensed, rather than saw, that his eyes were now boring into his own.

"That *panga* knife that you gave Barounggo. It was one of your samples?"

Ponsonby felt a certain guilt in admitting it.

King relapsed into his brooding, dark and pregnant of the things beyond Ponsonby's understanding. "Maybe," King rumbled, "I *am* just the man you need to meet. Maybe the gods of Africa have been manipulating the strings of fate." Suddenly he fired a lean, strong finger at Ponsonby like a gun. "Piet Vreeden carried your line, didn't he?"

Ponsonby had already been uneasy

about a something not entirely satisfactory about Piet Vreeden. "Yes, he used to be one of my steadiest customers. They told me, as I came through, that he had been ripped up by a leopard."

"That was the report that came through to the district officials," King said grimly. "But I'll tell you this: Piet Vreeden was ripped open and his bowels festooned along a village fence by three men of the *Mathchebu wa Chui,* the leopard society!"

"Good Lord!" Ponsonby's stout British subservience to constituted law was outraged. "Didn't you inform the police?"

"No." King said it with staggering simplicity. "Because two of those men had lost a brother and one a son who died because the steel spear blades that Vreeden had traded them failed them when their need came."

"Good Lord!"

KING twisted on his rock to point into the sky glow that smoldered its last dull anger. "Right there. Right back in that country from where I was coming and you were heading when we met." He relapsed to his rumination again; out of which came the growling conviction growling: "Yeah. Maybe I'm the white hunter you need to guide you by the hand and show you things that a lot of smug money-makers in England ought to know.

His voice was hard and practical. "I was headed for Entoto and I bragged that nothing would stop me. But I don't buck the gods of Africa. If they sent you I'll take you. To your own territory, that you wanted to look over and learn why." He called to the dark shapes of his two henchmen who huddled over the very smoke of their fire as only Africans can. "Tomorrow we trek back and go into the country of the Wa-tanga tribes."

"*Ow, Bwana!*" The querulous complaint came from Kaffa the Hottentot. "An evil people and hostile to white man. Moreover it is a country unknown to us and the report was that trade amongst them was difficult."

King grinned at Ponsonby. "Difficult. But I'll take you in and show you your territory, by golly. Even with no better a gun than this one to make a man of me."

Ponsonby fidgeted on his rock seat, Britishly abashed over the necessary intrusion of finance. "Awf'ly good of you and all that. But, er—I'm afraid I can't quite afford to pay that frightful white hunter fee, you know."

"You aren't hiring me." King's voice was as hot as the glow in his eyes. "This is a call, a mission put on me by the gods of Africa."

It was only his laugh, a little ribald, that saved him from melodrama. "Anyway, I was figuring to edge in on that Wa-tanga country some day and get acquainted, maybe scoop some of the business that Vreeden lost. I got a wagon load of trade at my friend Chief Muthengi's *boma,* waiting only till the Wa-tanga might have forgotten some of their lousy deal."

A sudden thought came to cloud King's decisions. He fired his finger at Ponsonby again. "If, that is to say.

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you've got the guts to go through a piece of territory spoiled by your man."

Ponsonby's monocle dropped while he stared. He said querulously: "Well, dash it all, I came to find out, didn't I?"

King's appraisal of Ponsonby showed itself in a sour scrutiny that slowly broke into a grin.

"The rest of the Hottentot proverb," he said, "is that sense, if the little gods have withheld it, can be added to guts by the great god of Experience. I'll maybe even bring you out of the woods alive. Which, if I do, you'll be useful."

"I rather think, old chap," Ponsonby said, "you're trying to spoof me. You don't look at all nervous about it yourself."

King's sardonic grin slowly hardened.

"In Africa—" He told Ponsonby the priceless rule—"a back country trader keeps alive by not letting the native know that he's nervous. Only he's got to be careful. A white man, armed, can get through a lot of Africa these days, if he doesn't let himself get caught napping, like Vreeden. He relied on his native woman to tip him off to anything cooking up against him; his trouble was she happened to be related to one of the men who died. No, sir—there's a lot of people in this land have said I'm no good, but they'll all admit I'm damned careful."

THE wagon lurched in vast drunken progress over the uneven plain; square-hooded like a truck, its wheels as high as a man's shoulder, they heaved slowly up over grass tussocks and ant bear mounds that the most skilled guiding could not avoid, and they came down on the other side with a crash that wrenched at every joint. It took eight span of cattle to haul the ponderous thing—sixteen oxen and two black boys who cracked twenty-foot whips about their ears and yelled with vast African exuberance.

There was never any secret about a trade wagon coming into a country. This one's progress served hardy notice that King came not as an official, not as a missionary, nor as a hunter, but out and out as a trader and nothing else.

It was a country of umbrella-topped acacias and great brown termite hills that looked like clustered roofs of huts.

"Poor agricultural country," King commented.

Ponsonby trudged beside him, interested but not impressed.

King expounded, "If you're interested in ethnology—which a trader should be and Piet Vreeden was not—this crowd hasn't evolved to an agricultural civilization; they're cattle raisers, therefore nomads who follow the grass, therefore a tougher crowd than the farmers we left in Muthengi's country."

"Do you mean, difficult to trade with?"

"To get along with."

"Why?"

"For one reason, they've got little to lose in a fight. Their property is on the hoof; they can run it into the brush. For another thing, being loose on the hoof, they've got to be ready to defend it against man or beast, and where there's fat cattle there's fatter lions and leopards and things. Hell, it's history. Masai, Gauchos, cow punchers, they've all got to be fighting men."

Ponsonby digested that over a plodding half mile. Then, "Would you tell me, old chap, why you're doing this?"

King laughed harshly. "Because I'm a trader. Because I want to crash this territory before some one else gets ahead of me."

Then Ponsonby said, "I rather fancy, old man, you're spoofing me again."

"Yeah?"

"Yes, I have an idea, don't you know, that you're a sort of a Quixote chappie who believes that good fighting men, whatever their color, ought to have good weapons to fight with."

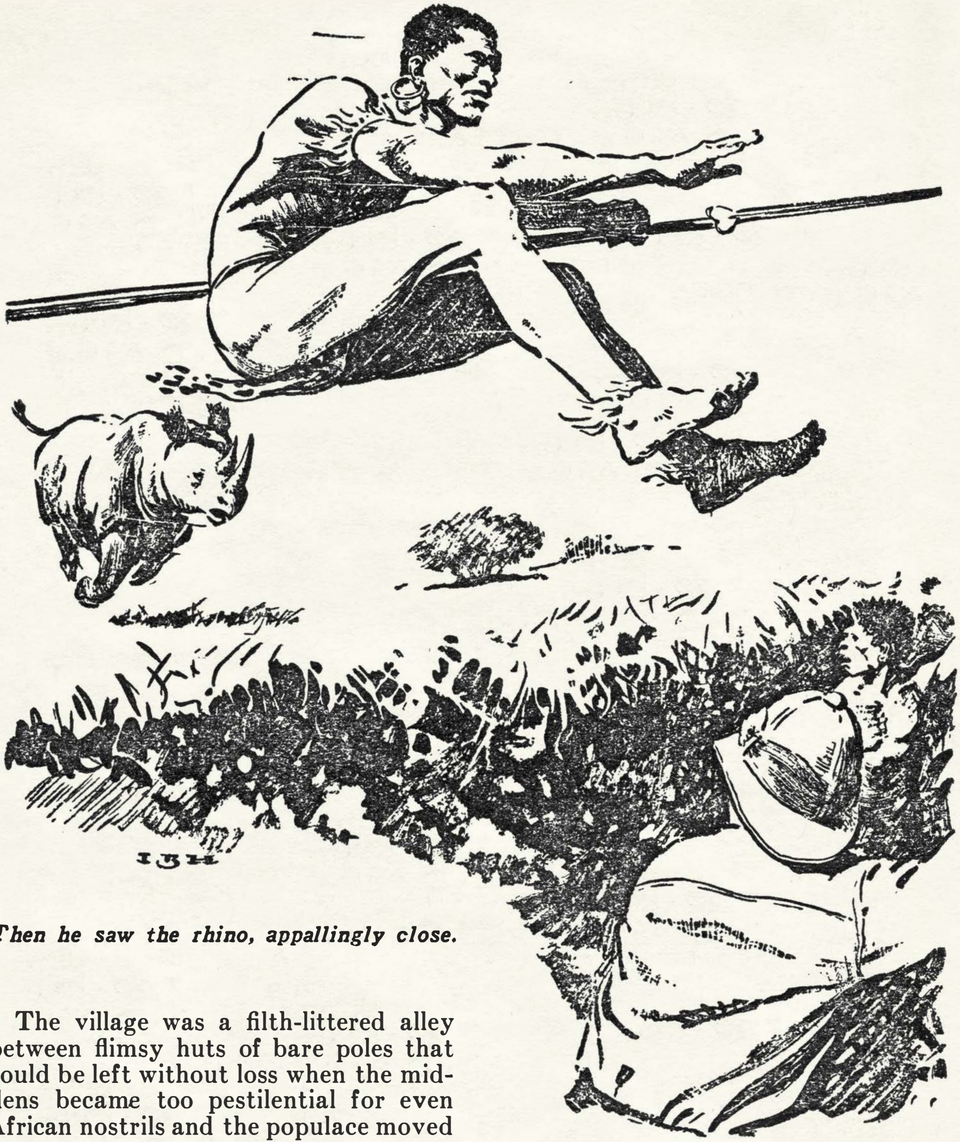
"Boloney!" King said.

Ponsonby laughed at him.

"You gave me credit once for perception," he said.

The wagon creaked and crashed for three days through that country before the brown ant hills in the distance turned out at last to be a village.

"We'll have to trade for meat," King said. "Where cattle eat off the grazing there's been no game. Watch now; you'll learn something."



Then he saw the rhino, appallingly close.

The village was a filth-littered alley between flimsy huts of bare poles that could be left without loss when the middens became too pestilential for even African nostrils and the populace moved away to better pastures.

King stopped before the fence that surrounded the largest hut. He refrained from the white man blunder of barging in. Through the interlaced branches of the fence could be seen women and goats and lounging men. None came forward with the big toothed grin and the, "*Jambo, Bwana,*" of greeting that had met them at Muthengi's boma. King nodded to Barounggo.

The Masai planted the steel spike of his spear butt in the ground between the gate poles; the slender, three-foot blade of it quivered its tempered steel in the sun. As a Masai he knew how to speak to lesser peoples, as he knew that they knew a Masai's worth.

"Out!" he shouted. "Out, little head man and be humble when the *Bwana,* master of an Elmoran, waits."

There was some scuffling and much muttering within the hut and through its interstices it could be seen that a man was dressing himself; that is to say, he was draping a sheet, rendered impervious to rain by boiling in rancid butter, about his shoulders. Respectfully dressed but sullen, he came to his gateway and stood on one leg, the heel of the other cupped in the hollow of his knee, leaning against a spear for balance.

"*Jambo,* Masai," he said. He kept his eyes averted from the necessity of greeting the white men.

"We require," Barounggo ordered him, "six fat goats, or a young calf. We give one spear in exchange."

Other men came to balance themselves at their gates; tall naked fellows, they said nothing but looked on in lowering silence, while the head man was telling the Masai with bare-faced effrontery, "We have no fat goats."

"A spear head," King told Ponsonby, "is damned good payment for half a dozen goats."

"Lie not!" The Masai growled at the head man. "Do I not see a good fat goat there?"

An obvious lie in Africa is only a form of expression. The man laughed insolently. "Let me then see your good spear head."

THE Masai folded his great arms. Bargaining was no thing for an Elmoran. It was the little Hottentot, keen as an ape to prove his wits in a trade, who hopped forward with a blade.

The head man fingered it, turned it around in his hands. Others of the men unhinged their legs and came forward. A spear trade was as important as a deal in a new automobile.

King nudged Ponsonby. "Look at the big buck with the scars."

The man he indicated was gashed with four parallel scars that spanned forehead, cheek, and chin from nose to ear.

"Leopard society mark. Tell you about it later. Watch the trade now for your soul's good. I don't like the looks of this set-up."

The men handled the blade, smelled at it, whittled a stick with it. Their faces remained dubious.

"There's a slogan you birds have," King told Ponsonby grimly. "British steel. There's places around the world where its a proud slogan. This is not one of them. And the hell of it is there's more places than this in Africa where it isn't, like some of your sleek business barons will be learning some day."

Ponsonby said nothing. But his face was flushed.

"Look at 'em," King told him. "Look at 'em well. There's one sample of why your gang's business is falling off. These dumb oxen can't read brand marks stamped into the article; they won't know whether a spear blade is any good till they've had to use it—and then it's maybe too late for anything but collecting the blood price off the trader. There's times the price can be settled with gifts to the family; but blood debts can stack up till there's no price but blood. These surly fellows haven't forgotten your Vreeden— All right, Kaffa, take the five goats that they offer and let's get going."

The wagon creaked and crashed on its way. There were no shouts of, "*Kua heri,* or "*Ya-kuonana,*" meaning "May we meet again;" no women jostling to wheedle a safety pin or a key ring to hang into their ear lobes.

"An insolent village." The Masai growled as he stalked.

"An ill village to trade and hostile, as I warned *Bwana* before ever we came," the Hottentot complained.

"A leopard village," King told Ponsonby. "That fellow thought he was big and tough enough not to take orders, so the Mahethebu wa Chui marked him."

For all of King's studied casualness, Ponsonby felt the chill tingle of one of Africa's darker aspects.

"What about these leopards, old man? Doesn't the Colonial government do anything about them?"

King shrugged. "They keep trying. But it's a big job and it covers a lot of territory. The Mahethebu is as secret as the Mafia. They meet masked, a sort of vigilante society or a Ku-Klux with African trimmings. Anybody doesn't do what he's told, they jump him some night and put the four gash marks on him with steel claws on their fingers. Anybody they've really got it in for, they pin him spread-eagled up against the village fence with a big wooden skewer through each upper arm and disembowel him with one swipe. Colonial police can never find out anything 'cause nobody dares to squeal."

Like all nomadic people, the Wa-tanga lived in patriarchal, or clan, groups; each clan claimed grazing rights over certain territory and each carried its own distinguishing marks.

It was in the next clan territory that the distinguishing mark obtruded itself with an unpleasant jolt. The business of trading for food was accomplished by the same sulks that left King hardily unperturbed, but it was while a tall warrior was showing his sullen suspicion of the hardware offered that King felt the back of his head being positively bored into by Kaffa's eyes.

"Keep an eye peeled," he told Ponsonby. "The Hottentot has something." He knew that the little man's eyes missed less than would any monkey and he turned with casual assurance of ease.

"Aa-ah!" King's exhalation drew Ponsonby's head around in a flash. "Look at that guy's spear. Notice anything?"

"No—oh yes, these fellows spear heads are little short ones, not like your big chap's young sword."

"I mean, about their ornamentation around the haft?"

"No."

"Well." A brittleness was in King's voice. "It's the same as the broken end that stuck in your rhino."

"Was there a broken—I never noticed a—" Ponsonby's monocle fell to dangle on its string. "Good Lord, d'you mean to say that—"

His stare had the taut strain of a dawning nausea.

KING'S attitude of calm assurance had slipped from him like an unwanted cloak. His whole body tightened up to wary expectation of the anything

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that could happen in Africa. His eyes, pinched narrow, were flitting to light momentarily on every detail of the scene—the groupings of tall sullen men, their attitudes, the expressions on their individual faces, he noted each and flashed to the next. He spoke without looking at Ponsonby.

"Means nothing—yet. Could be no more than just cussed coincidence. A spear could be traded from hand to hand across the continent. Or a nomadic hunter might travel a hundred miles. Or, at its worst, it could have happened right here, and a molested animal will then often travel a hundred miles, and a hundred is just about what we've come—Come along, Kaffa. Close the deal and let's move on into the open."

He said it in English. The little Hottentot would never admit that he could understand a word. But the deal was closed; the whip boys yelled and crackled little puffs of dust about their cattles' ears; the wagon lurched and creaked on its protesting way.

King let it pass and fell in behind its dust, a rear guard against he didn't know what, stiff and erect, his back broad to whatever might be behind.

"Don't look back," he told Ponsonby. "Never let man or meat-eating beast smell a sign of nervousness." Out of the side of one eye he watched Ponsonby square his shoulders and adjust his monocle with a flourish. A laugh was always a good offset to any taint of nervousness. So King contrived one for the scowling populace.

"If your back crawls like mine, Britisher," he crackled his parting laugh, "we'll need a drink when we get out of this."

At the end of the village the drivers' sudden onslaught on their beasts swerved the wagon to scrape the very wall of the last hut. The Hottentot, too, stood to let it pass and fell in behind King to mutter:

"The middle of the road, *Bwana!* The wheels have not touched it."

King saw and stepped over it without changing his stride. It was a design marked on the ground so recently that tiny scrapings of earth still fell into the depressions; a rough oblong, each side of it consisted of four parallel lines scored deep in the hard packed dirt. Twigs and beans, prettily spotted, marked a design within the design.

"Bad medicine," King muttered, and he swore emphasis to it. "Damned bad medicine."

Well away from the village and out of sight behind mimosa scrub he called a halt.

"Council of war."

Ponsonby's innate sense of the proprieties were still unattuned to outlandish ideas.

"With your African servants?"

King grinned a rebuke. "Never having been a big shot office executive or an officer in an army, I got a crazy theory it's a square deal to the rank and file to let 'em talk their way out of the hole we're all of us in."

CHAPTER III

THE LEOPARDS' PREY

KAFFA the Hottentot did most of the talking. Not an item had his eyes missed. "It was undoubtedly a *thahu, Bwana,* a curse laid in our path by a *mudu-mugu* of the leopards."

"The leopards, certainly," King agreed. "For the lines are the four claws, raked into the earth with steel. But we were not there very long; how do we know that a curse was built so swiftly for us? Could it not be just a sign that the village is one controlled by the Wa-Chui?"

The Hottentot's wizened face contorted into myriad wrinkles of astute delight in interpreting even bad luck. "But it is simple, *Bwana.* The long figure of four sides is no man's house, for houses are round. It is the wagon. The twigs were the *murumbiru* shrub of sorcery and they were six, as we are six. The spotted beans of the castor oil were sixteen, as our cattle are sixteen and spotted."

"Damn if I don't believe you're right." King's frown studied the picture. "I don't suppose you could read just what the curse said?"

"Nay, *Bwana,* that is known only to the sorcerer who built the curse. We know only that the leopards are here and that they are hostile."

"And if they've got the gall to put the mark on a white man caravan, it means they're mad enough for mischief." King scowled into the distance from where they had come; then his brows lifted to shrug a dour optimism. "Maybe it's no more than a Ku Klux warning to stay the hell out of there. But all the same it'll be wise to be careful—and the best way to be careful, Little Wise Ape, is to up and run like devils other than the WaChui were after us. Is it not so?"

The Masai growled his characteristic objection. "How many are we? Five good men; and even the white man with one good eye has courage and might be taught some small use. How many of the leopards can there be in one small village? Ten, perchance, or twenty? *Kefule!* Let us go back and demand an apology for this insolent witch writing."

The two whip boys only stared like their own oxen, round-eyed, willing to be led. The Hottentot chittered rage at the Masai. "So snorts *kifaru,* who has bulk but no wit. Children at monkey height know that where the leopards are strong they can order a whole tribe to sharpen their spears and blow the war horns. We know that they have been strong enough to tear the bowels from one trader because of his faithless metal. How will they know what trader's metal it was that betrayed their hunter to *kifaru? Bwana,* it is wiser that we go swiftly."

King nodded slowly, frowning down at his boot toe, and then more decidedly.

"Particularly, *Bwana,*" the Hottentot added a grim observation to clinch the argument, "since two of those *murumbiru* twigs, the two largest, were peeled with a knife, white around the middle."

"The hell you say!" King relieved Ponsonby's impatience with a translation of the discussion. "And two of the sticks represent particularly us with our bellies laid bare to the ill wind that blows. So we're going to shove our pride in our pockets and run like hell."

Ponsonby's eyes, as the full significance of it soaked in, began to widen. King watched for the monocle to drop. "D'you mean to say, old man—" It dropped. "Excuse the personality, my dear fellow, but if you propose to run, the situation must be pretty dashed serious, eh? You mean you're going to abandon the wagon and all that and leg it?"

"Damned if I will." King bit on the obstinate refusal. "Let 'em know they've got us scared, and the whole district will be up and whooping on our trail. We're still armed white men—or at any rate one of us. We can hold 'em off in open country. But it's wiser to get out of this district instead of bulling on through. These people are more on the prod than I figured, what with this rhino trouble and all. We'll just head out southeast for the M'tusi country. That's traded by a fellow I know, and he carried a decent line of goods."

So southeast the wagon lumbered its labored course, steering wide of distant clustered ant hills that might turn out to be villages.

But dim drums throbbed in the hot air behind them and other drums whispered gutturally back from in front of them.

"I don't like it," King growled. "Drums could be no more than native jamboree, but they could be anything else, and these rhythms are new even to Kaffa." Savagely he rubbed in the lesson. "Here's one example of what lousy trade goods can do."

Ponsonby produced the standard defense.

"But it's an accepted business principle, my dear fellow. Export goods, so long as they're better than the local supply, always find a market. For African savages, then—what I mean, people practically in the stone age, any sort of a—"

King wouldn't let him finish. "That's a matter that'll boomerang back on your fat manufacturers one of these fine days. Nor I don't give a hoot if its cheap perfumery or shoddy cotton goods and tin pots. Any smart white man can come back and argue himself a repeat order on a worn out gee string. But weapons—steel—that's something else again."

"I'm beginning to see—"

"Damned right you are. Savages are practical people; their reasoning goes no farther than cause and direct effect. Lousy weapons, death, blood price.

That's one cash consideration for your businessmen to look at, even if they don't give a hoot about somebody else's life."

His growl coughed harshly from him like a charging lion's.

"So here's us; two white men getting chased out of a district that's in a British colony— *If* we get out. I can't read those drums but, by golly, I know a war horn when I hear one. *Eweh,* there! You cattle drivers! Head for that rock *kloof.* We'll hole up till we see what's what."

BY THE time they gained the rock outcrop and King, ferociously swearing, had found defensive shelter between boulders that suited him, the drumming that had been pervading the horizon had come to a focus. It was hidden, still, behind mimosa scrub, but every now and then a wave of yells rose out of the muttering roll.

"Talking up their courage," King grunted. "A mob is a mob wherever you find it. My guess is that our friends the leopards are whooping up the populace for a lynching." He slammed open the bolt of Ponsonby's new rifle, scowled disgustedly into the mechanism; then he broke open several packets of cartridges and laid them in fives, ready to hand.

Ponsonby watched him with the fascination of unbelief in what he saw.

"But, my dear fellow, this is a British colony! Pacified years ago and policed by rural constabulary, so they told me. There can't be a bally open war like this."

"Sure a British colony." King kicked rubble from under his shooting position. "A district official comes on tour every six months and collects hut tax and a white policeman rides through it every now and then and the local headmen come to his tent and report all quiet on the Western front. Sure it's pacified. And when this is all over, whichever way it goes, it'll still be all quiet. Because the officials will never hear a peep about any of it, unless it'll be that two more white men had an unfortunate accident with a leopard, or got bit by a snake or something. A lot of things can happen to a man in Africa. The Wa-Chui, I'm telling you, are more secret than the Mafia. It's black men keeping a secret against white. Certainly this country is pacified."

By this time the mob had come into sight. Dark shapes detached themselves from the farther tree boles and massed in a hesitant horde on the plain below.

"Humh! A good hundred of 'em. Well, a good white man with white man weapons has held off more than that of savages before now. Barounggo, go on down and tell 'em to get the hell back to their homes before widows will be tearing the spirit hole in the thatch."

"My sacred word!" King was becoming more unbelievable to Ponsonby by the minute. "You take it jolly cool."

King was able to grin at him under his frown of preoccupation. "Excitement neither thinks nor shoots straight. What's more, it takes disciplined men and leadership to rush a position against accurate rifle fire, and your Pax Britannica has taught the colored brother all about white man superiority. Taught 'em a long range rifle is better than a whole lot of spears."

Barounggo was striking his arrogant posture before the crowd. Naked except for a serval cat skin girdle, the wind ruffled his black ostrich plumes and monkey tail garters, the sun threw his great muscles up in high lights of yellow brown, glinted a long sharp line from his spear. A menacing figure, he swaggered before the mob. Imperious, belligerent, he shouted commands at them. They lowered before him like oxen. But here and there out of the crowd voices shouted back. The distance was a good three hundred yards, to far to distinguish what was being said.

King grunted. "See those conical hoods of straw bobbing about amongst them? And you'll note they keep well in the rear. Leopard men, masked, whooping 'em on."

"I thought there'd be more." King's coolness was vastly reassuring to Ponsonby. "I only see about ten."

"It's enough." King barked a sardonic laugh. "It's the same in any color; the lads smart enough to organize an ogpu talk the dumb clucks into doing the storm troop stuff. Damn, with a gun of my own I could pick some of those coyotes off from right here. But—" His mouth twisted down at the rifle.

Barounggo was stalking back. Before reporting to King he stood on a rock and waved his spear above his head in a wide threatening circle. Then he stood before his white master.

"They are insolent cattle, *Bwana,* and their talk has the cunning of leopards but the honor of hyaenas that eat corpses. They say, *Bwana,* that they have no war with black men, who are all dupes together. But the two white traders, they say, must pay the price of blood with blood. Therefore, if we black men agree, we may leave you here and walk away in peace. But if we do not agree, then I must wave my spear around as a signal and who falls in the fight, it is his fate."

"I take it," King said dryly, "that you decided for all of you."

"Nay, *Bwana.*" The great fellow laughed his arrogant assurance. "What choice was there in such a decision? Can a man bargain with hyaenas?"

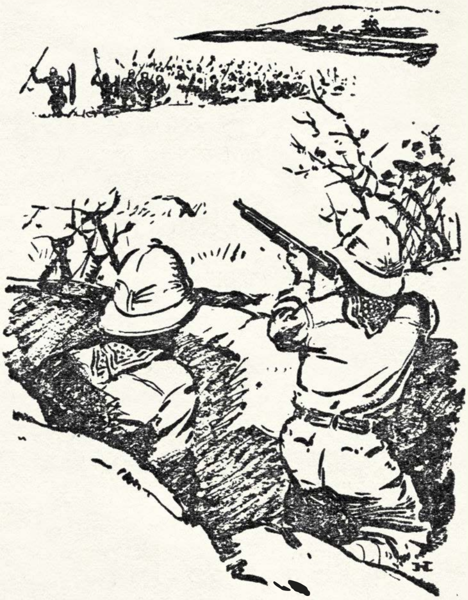
King stood up from his crouched position and reached a hand to grip the Masai's muscled shoulder. The rough tremor that went through his arm was all that he said. But his short laugh joined Barounggo's and his surge of pride was not above telling the thing to Ponsonby.

"Dashed sporting, I call it," said Ponsonby. "I jolly well knew he was a gentleman."

The creases of King's short humor about his mouth merged into other creases, deep set, very hard. His eyes pinched down to far sighting narrowness.

"So now they'll be coming." He crouched down to shooting position again. "I hate to do this," he growled. "These bullets will knock a hole in a man as big as a plate. And you can bet those masked Chui coyotes will see to it that it won't be their fate to get hit."

"*Ngalio, Bwana!*" The Hottentot shrilled warning. Watch out! Now is the time to show them! That tall fellow, *Bwana,* who leaps high there towards the left. See, he leads a group of his household."



"Watch out! Now is the time to show them death!"

"Ye-eh! Poor dumb devil! He's got to be stopped." The heavy rifle roared out. The wretched man spun as though he had been hit with a sledge hammer and sprawled to be hidden in the grass. His yelling, eager troop shrank back into the mob.

THE mob milled and howled. The sun on brandished spear heads twinkled like stars over a black night. Voices shrilled above the mob's hoarse hubbub; they were the standard tones of the Wa-Chui designed to copy the snarl of a leopard and to disguise their voices.

"Lousy balance," King grated. "The thing kicks like an old eight gauge, and throws high to left. That man should have dropped flat."

"Another one, *Bwana!* To the right of middle there! He with the ochred hair eggs on his troop."

The Masai stood impassively aloof and watched lesser men die. He took a little horn from his ear lobe, tapped snuff from it onto his great blade and sniffed it up with a windy inhalation.

The oxen drivers squatted and stared with white rolling eyes.

Ponsonby took out his monocle, polished it, put it back, took it out, polished it.

"Good Lord!" he kept repeating, and, "My sacred aunt!"

"To the left again, *Bwana!*" The Hottentot shrilled.

That overzealous leader paid his price.

"I say, old man!" Ponsonby was awed, his ruddy face white. "This is a pretty ghastly lesson, what?"

"To them?" King flared again as he spoke.

"To me. I mean about—well, trade goods and Africans and all that sort of thing."

"Told you you'd"—King fired again—"you'd learn. Experience is—Hell, they're coming fast!"

He snatched a five of cartridges, juggled them into the breech, fired, slammed out the bolt, fired. "Got to stop that rush, by—God!" The cry tore from King's throat as might a man's last strong cry in life.

"The blasted thing's jammed!"

He wrenched out his hunting knife and pried at the bolt in a frenzy. Then his breath fought strangled from him like a death rattle.

"No it isn't. It's broken!"

His hands on the gun gripped it as though they would in sheer agony of frustration twist the useless thing to further fragment. His throat gulped at its constriction and let his voice through, dry and flat, like somebody else quoting a platitude.

"Steel!" it said. "Cheap steel!"

The Masai bounded out of his impassivity. The Hottentot was already pawing at the weapon in King's hands.

"What goes wrong, *Bwana?* What so great evil is in *Bwana's* voice?"

It was not by any stretch of reflection Ponsonby's direct fault. But King looked only at him. He answered the question to him.

"White men," he said. "Weaponless!"

The mob below had been stopped by the grisly effect of those deadly smashing bullets. But only a few seconds of hesitant milling showed them that no more came. Their half-cowed shouting swelled to encouraging yells, surged to a roar of howling. Shrill leopard voices squealed high behind them. Their rush came in a dark stampede of straining bodies and twinkling spears.

Barounggo bounded to the front and stood on wide planted feet, his spear couched in both hands. His deep laugh rolled from him in a continuous growl.

King screamed at him. "No use, Barounggo! Drop it! Drop it, you damned fool!"

Barounggo never looked back.

"Some will yet eat spear. *Ss-ssghee!*" he shouted. "Come, cattle herders. An Elmoran of the Masai waits."

THERE was never any impractical heroism about King. His belief that anything could happen in Africa was supported by a sturdy conviction that, according to all the laws of chance, the happening could just as well be good, and if it was not, then an alert opportunist might yet turn bad to good.

He rushed at the superb Masai maniac, took him unexpectedly. He snatched the great spear from him and flung it far behind. He screamed at him, "Six against a hundred! We give in. And if we white men survive the first spears there may yet be a chance."

He leaped back and scrambled to a high rock.

"Up!" he yelled to Ponsonby. "Up out of the first rush and let the leopards talk! They're not blood mad—not yet!"

High above the wave that surged up the incline, he held the rifle where everybody could see it and threw it away from him. The wave broke around the base of the rock, roaring. Spears thrust up at them. Screaming men jumped high to reach at them.

Leopard voices squealed high in command. The straw masks, like little steeples, fought to shove through to the now harmless front. Till presently there was a ring of them round the base of the rock, squealing and snarling for order.

Reluctantly the madness passed from the mob. Masks turned to stare at the most rebellious voices. The men cowered away from them.

A voice squeaked, "It is the white men. The white traders we take with us.

Against black brothers we have no blood debt."

King looked down on it all. As ill a situation as the grim gods of Africa had ever shown him. He shrugged acceptance of he did not know what in store. His voice was flat and as grim as the turn that the gods had played on him.

He looked down at the Mahethebu-Wa-Chui. "The white men come. But our black servants go free."

A voice squeaked a shrill laugh from within a mask.

"The black men go free," it said.

"Come along," King told Ponsonby. "and hold a tight check on any superior ideas you may have about being manhandled by black men. Stand for anything, or the only argument you'll get will be a spear."

He slid down from the rock. Only two little pulsating ridges that swelled over his jaw muscles showed that he bit his teeth tight over whatever was to come. In silence as impassive as the Masai's he suffered the indignity of having his hunting knife wrenched from his belt, having himself pawed around, his hands tied behind him with grass rope.

It was the Masai who shouted, raved from beyond a barrier of a score of men who held spears to his chest. They laid insult on the Bwana Kingi, he roared. Kingi, *mwinda na simba,* the hunter of lions, *na pigana n'gagi na mikonake,* who fights gorillas with his hands. Kingi, whom an Elmoran is proud to serve. He shouted threats. He would make a war, he promised; he would raise twenty men and bring desolation to this insolent tribe.

He even demeaned himself to threaten that he would so far let vengeance out of his own hands as to bring the *Serkali,* the white man's government, down on this district.

Some of the spearmen turned away their faces so that they might not later be recognized. Some dropped their eyes and muttered half apologetically that they had no quarrel with the Masai people; it was only white traders that they had been ordered to attack.

But a derisive voice squeaked out of a mask: "One white trader has paid a little of the overdue price for our many young men who have died. What difference is there in these two?"

"What difference?" King barked a bitter little laugh. "How can these people know the difference till they've tested the goods? All right, Barounggo. It's no use. Take charge of the wagon and take it out by way of the Ndolia mission. It is an order. I will meet you there. It is a promise."

Round holes turned to stare at the effrontery of it. No derisive comment came from any mask. Dully suspicious, the very attitudes of the grotesque little steeples of plaited straw. some thrust forward, some perked sideways, indicated that they wondered what unknown power this white man might still have up his sleeve that let him be so calm. But since no further portent emerged, no sudden modern magic of destruction, they gathered up their resolution and herded their prisoners before them. The rabble streamed down the hill to the open plain.

King growled a certain satisfaction. "That'll keep Barounggo out of anything rash for a time, anyhow." He nudged Ponsonby with his elbow. "Go on, talk. Laugh. Make a show of it. The tougher we brag to these fellows, the more they'll think before doing anything."

Ponsonby's stiff British upper lip was able to respond. His tone remained as naturally casual as ever, even hopeful.

"Did you mean that, old man? About meeting your wagon at some mission? It wasn't just a—a Yankee bluff?"

King produced his hardy laugh. "Hell, the wagon's safer'n we are. Men can have an unfortunate accident and a village headman can offer the next constable patrol the evidence of bones that tell no tales. But goods talk. If any native village would suddenly be unduly rich in hardware, some bright policeman would start putting things together."

"Awf'y consoling and all that, my dear fellow, to know that your wagon load of goods has a chance of getting out. Quite jolly. Ha-ha-ha— Haa-aah— Oh! Dammitall, there goes my bally eyeglass!"

It semed so ludicrous that the monocle dangling on its string was the major tragedy that King cackled a response. The natives stared owl-eyed and muttered to one another over these white men who in their circumstances could still laugh.

THE cortege reached the fringe of brush out of which it had come. The straw masks squeaked commands. The rank and file obediently drifted away in their various directions to their respective villages.

Only masks remained to prod their prisoners with spears into a path that none of the others followed.

King grunted. "So the Leopard Society stages a private performance before it gets to the dirty work along the village thorn fence. That's something I didn't know about them."

Ponsonby stared at him with eyes as blank as holes in a mask. "Seems to me these chappies—nine or ten of them, aren't there?—would be enough to do something pretty ghastly to just two of us with our hands tied."

King grated a harsh chuckle. "That order about taking care of the wagon wasn't all of it a bluff. It kept the boys out of any foolhardy trouble when blood ran hot and it leaves us now with four men free and wide open to help us. Four good men to ten or eleven is a heap better odds than to a hundred."

Ponsonby remained pessimistic. And reasonably so. Hands tied, hustled by spear points that callously drew blood with every prod, driven like a sacrificial goat along a faint trail that twisted through thick thorn scrub, he was hardly to be blamed.

"Four African servants." He stated his near despair, and his smile was only a set grimace now.

"Not servants," King snapped. "Two of them, perhaps, the two drivers. But the other two are men who've been through enough tough spots with me to stand by in this one."

"Your Masai, yes," Ponsonby conceded gloomily. "But how long will it take him to round up any help How long have we got before—" He wet his lips to continue the grisly thought that was in his mind, and then shut them down tight on it.

"Not the Masai. Kaffa."

"The little Hottentot? Why, he's the timid one!"

King scowled his troubled introspection as he plodded along. At times his lips tightened over his memories; at times they let go again to break in the beginnings of a pale smile. "Timid—like an ape. He can't offer to fight the world single-handed, yet I've seen a hamadryas baboon jump a leopard when his superior intelligence told him his chance was good. It's wits we'll need to get us out of this hole, if at all. And wits is what the little Hottentot fights with."

"I hope you're jolly well right, old man. The nearer that sun gets toward night, the less I can keep from thinking of Piet Vreeden. And listen to these fellows. They're talking in their normal voices now. Seem pretty cold sure that nobody will be in a position to give evidence against them. D'you want me to laugh just to show my bally nerve?"

King did not ask him to laugh. He did not laugh himself. He said only: "This much at least we're sure of: they're not warriors and they're a secret organization, just smart enough to get braver men to do the front line fighting for them—and there's folks who hold that a gang that operates under masks isn't so long on guts."

It was little enough comfort.

It was still daylight when the twisty path suddenly turned another corner and came out on a clearing in the thorn scrub. Not a village, just a space that stank of human usage and had a fringe of huts around a third or so of its arc. A little apart was a single, much larger hut. That was all. That and the close, thorn jungle.

The white men were shoved into a hut, darkly odorous. Nobody said anything to them. But two broad spear heads that moved in silhouette before the open oblong of the doorway showed that escape would be a futile thought. Not a sound came from outside; there was only the blank silence of the jungle in that period before the dusk when the day creatures are thinking of sleep and the night creatures are thinking of waking up.

Through the doorway the prisoners could see the solitary larger hut, over its doorway the ominous fraternity insignia. A white leopard skull.

"Pretty slick," King grunted. "If any copper should ever chance on this, all they'd have to do would be to hide away that skull and the place would be an innocent *thiringa,* a community club house for the unmarried men who get troublesome around the village women and so get chased out by the elders."

"Really, old fellow," Ponsonby snapped at him. "I can't get interested in African ethmology just now. How are your wrists? Any chance of wriggling free?" His own dry panting showed that he strained at his own ropes.

He fell silent. There was nothing cheerful to talk about.

CHAPTER IV

DANCE OF DEATH

DARKNESS came. The night woke up and talked the dark secrets of the jungle in its varied tongues—trills, squeals, snarls. No honest, full throated lion voices, for the jungle holds none. All the voices were furtive, all engaged in the merciless necessity of killing some smaller thing to eat. The moon came up to let shadows crawl over the yellow ground. The broad spear heads moved restlessly before the doorway.

It was Ponsonby who suddenly uttered a gasping, "Good God!"

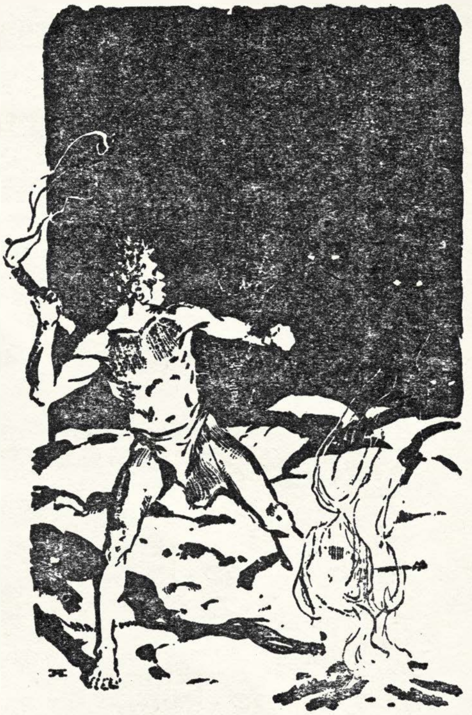
"Huh?" King had been brooding over his slender hopes, his eyes focussed on nothing.

"An—er, a large animal just ran out of the jungle. Right into the door of the big hut. It—I thought it looked like a leopard!"

"Aa-ah!" King's throat made the form of his characteristic exclamation, but the sound of it was nearer to a moan than he cared to let himself hear. He swallowed hard before he was able to say, "I've heard of this. *M'cheso mya Chui,* the leopard dance."

"What does it mean—for us?"

"Not so good." King held his voice hard between his teeth. "A sort of cat and mouse game with their victims. Keeps the mice just alive till the cats get tired and take 'em over to the village thorn fence to let the public see what happens."



Ponsonby said nothing. King heard him swallow dryly in the dark. The "animal" came out of the big hut. First a flat head with wide gaping teeth, white in the moonlight; it peered with feline caution round the doorway. Then the spotted body followed, sinuously hugging the door post. It crouched. Then it emitted a throaty, mm'mr-r-r-row, like a magnified cat calling to its family and it rolled in a moon patch to bat at the air.

Then Ponsonby could see the spotted legs flat and tied over the man's chest and flanks. Another leopard ambled towards it, out of one of the smaller huts. The first one, with marvelous agility, leaped high and away and poised with arched back.

Others came to join in the dance—the play, rather, as each of them had watched leopards play in the jungle and now copied their gambols. The human rendition of it forcefully emphasized that the whole play of the great cats is designed by Nature for practise for the two sole purposes of their lives; either for the capture and cruel wearing down of their prey, or for fighting amongst the males, the tactics of which is to grapple and disembowel the antagonist.

King whispered, "When they get tired of that, they'll pull us out. Leaving our legs free so we can run like rats and make sport."

Ponsonby was able to keep a steady voice. "Looks like a sticky end, old man. D'you suppose, if we could kick one of them good and hard in the right places, he'd get savage enough to make it quick?"

But the leopard men were not tiring of their play yet. They seemed to possess all the vitality of the cats they copied. The moon was coming up behind the prison hut. As though by calculated refinement of cruel design, the black door framed the shapes of the broad guarding spears and the moon-flecked jungle amphitheater with its back drop of the leopard house.

It was a consummate imitation that the fraternity brothers, with all their savage faculty for mimicry, gave of feline play. Purring against the door posts like homing cats, sniffing the air for danger; madly across the clearing, frisking in the jungle fringe.

Something he had never noticed before was forced on Ponsonby's half hynotized fascination—that the cats are noisy only in actual fight.

In the broken light it was startlingly easy to take them for the beasts they copied, but the moon glinted silver every now and then from great steel claws.

Only the muted pad of feet and the furry chafe of colliding bodies came. The surrounding jungle shuffled and squeaked and furtively crouched to watch man, the master beast, prance.

It was King whose sudden shout showed how tautly the spectacle had been stretching his nerves.

Immediately a leopard-capped head peered inside. The rest of the body followed and the rank stench of ill cured hide filled the hut as the wearer groped to assure himself that the prisoners remained tied.

The man grunted assurance to his companion and went out.

King's whisper to Ponsonby was fierce in its exultation. "By God, I knew he'd figure out something! Watch that leopard by the jungle's edge! Just around that big tree trunk! That littlest leopard of the lot!"

The smallest leopard emerged to prance with the others.

"D'you mean—?" The question was hoarse in Ponsonby's throat.

"Cripes a'mighty, I told you he was smart. Watch him imitate the others. Timid, huh? Like an ape."

The little leopard's mimicry was exquisite. He cat-footed with the others. He rolled on his back and batted at moon shadows; he let himself be chased and sprang away sideways on stiff legs. He chased others. He hid as they hid—

And carefully he pranced always in the most shadowy spots.

The clearing would be empty for long pauses at a time, filled only with a sense of intent watching from behind obstacles; the emptiness broken by a rush of bodies that would almost meet headlong, would leap high and would race away to be chased into hiding again.

The smallest leopard leaped with them, raced from them, sat on his haunches in affected cat indifference and licked at his flanks in grotesque postures, sprang high, scuttled away as others prowled near.

King's hardy confidence that had sunk closer to despair than he cared to admit needed no more than that small mushroom of hope to swell to its normal alert preparedness.

"Three to eleven. We unarmed. That's odds a little stiffer than I had hoped. But I don't see how it could be any different here. Watch that beautiful little devil. Watch the craft of him. By golly, I'll buy him six wives for this."

THE little leopard's craft was apparent in his gamboling ever closer to the prison cage. He would stop in the moonlight and peer into the darkness of the door; he would sniff as though scenting mice. Once, when the clearing emptied of dancers, he slipped close and was instantly swallowed into the black shadow of the hut.

"Aa-ah!" King tightened all over. But a leopard man raced out of his hiding to meet another in mid clearing. Others pranced into the mêlée. The smallest leopard skipped away to gambol around them.

Twice again it happened. Twice within the next twenty crawling minutes the clearing emptied of cats and twice the mice held their breath. But each time the little one was prowling just too far to make use of his chance.

Those were the most excruciating minutes of the whole imprisonment to King. It was the warm stickiness of his hands that let him know that he must have been straining at his bonds until the coarse grass rope had rasped his wrists to bleeding. An awful thought assailed him that the thing was by design; that the cats cunningly knew and that, sure of their mice, this was exquisite refinement of their play. The wetness that oozed down his face from his forehead was salty on his dry lips.

When it came, it was without any preparation of tightening nerves, with the sudden silent ferocity of a leopard's pounce.

King did not even know that the clearing was empty. All he knew was that one of the guards in the outer dark grunted a startled question to which the answer was the soft hiss of metal piercing flesh, followed instantly by a muted gasp, and then the sound of limbs subsiding on hard packed earth.

Then out of the darkness on the other side of the doorway came an astonished challenge. *"Mtu yupi? Kunani?* Who's that? What's happening?" Followed quickly a repetition of the swift blade to flesh.

The doorway darkened to a quickly ducking shape and the Hottentot's voice came, vibrant with a fierce satisfaction.

"This time I was hiding in the shadow of the hut." And a wailing little cry. "It is well, *Bwana?* Are you in condition to fight, *Bwana?"*

Before King could reply the Hottentot had nosed him out like a dog and was whimpering as he felt for lashings to be cut.

King was laughing softly, the low crackling laughter of relief, of action after near despair.

"It is well done, little Apeling. Now loose the other one." He was flexing his fingers and stretching his shoulders. "Where is now Barounggo?"

The moon-speckled clearing was alive again with posturing, leaping, cat shapes, too preoccupied with their play to discern in the black shadow of their mouse trap that guards slumped on the ground rather than stood upright.

"Barounggo," the Hottentot said, as pleased as a small child, reporting obedience, "is already on his way with the wagon to the Ndolia country, as *Bwana* ordered."

Ponsonby's whisper was tensely urgent over his shoulder. "D'you think, old man, we'll have a chance to sneak out the next time they go into hiding?"

"Not one in a million," King said with a cheerful finality that was surging to high tide after its depression.

Kaffa's dark form ducked out of the

"I MAKE SURE EACH BOTTLE'S BIGGER—12 OUNCES FULL"
"I MAKE SURE EACH SWALLOW TASTES GOOD"
PEPSI-COLA
A SPARKLING BEVERAGE
REFRESHING-SATISFYING
12 OUNCES
REFRESHING-ENJOYABLE
5¢
12 OZ. BOTTLE

doorway, ducked immediately back. "Their two spears, *Bwana*. The sowing of Barounggo's many lessons to *Bwana* will now bear red fruit, and my knife has already learned the road to silence. It is enough. And the glass eye might also be of some small help. Let us go swiftly before ill fate leads one to look close."

"Aa-ah!" King slid his hands along the spear haft in the dark to feel out its balance. "Not a chance to sneak out," he repeated to Ponsnoby. "But a damned fine chance to fight out. We're white men armed again."

His laugh barked out. "Here's where we get our chance, Britisher, to show how good our white man superiority is when it's even weapons both ways." And he was suddenly very grim. "And here's where you learn what it feels like to hope to God this still isn't some of your Piet Vreeden's trading. Anyway, remember they're masked coyotes, and a spear handles like a bayonet more or less, only there's more science to it. Come on, Kaffa! Now is as good as any time."

HE SLIPPED through the doorway and stood for just a moment in the shadow to orient the whole scene.

Two leopard men grappled in mimicry of the disemboweling tactic. A third poised, ready to leap in on the loser. Others prowled or posed as the moment caught them.

King raced out into the moonlight, straight for the group of three. Not a fleeting compunction troubled him about taking them at their disadvantage. Destruction was his single purpose. Plain slaughter, as fast and as efficient as might be.

The man poised above the grapplers looked up in time to let out a hoarse yelp and to leap high and away with all the instant, steel spring agility of a cat. But King's lunge to the full reach of his own long arm and spear drove low into the man's belly in mid leap. He screamed once and dropped to roll over and over, doubled up in the shadows. The two grapplers, wretched fellows, were still twisting apart when the broad spear head stabbed down at the one. The other one's screeching was a caterwaul of frenzy as he fought to free himself from his fellow's convulsed clutch. King grunted his effort to wrench his blade out of the quivering back and chest and grunted again to heave up and pin the fellow hard to the ground.

Ponsonby's shout came, astoundingly true to form. "Yoicks and awa-ay!"

"Attaboy!" King yelled his own excitement and encouragement. "Coyotes are like foxes!"

He dragged his blade free in time to turn and see Ponsonby inexpertly tugging to clear his spear from the side of a man who reeled drunkenly about and screamed, to see another leopard man rushing at Ponsonby with a ready spear —to see the Hottentot, running like a baboon in the half dark, converge upon the spearman, leap high to his shoulders and hack at him with his knife.

Quick padding steps claimed his immediate attention. A long limbed fellow came at him, his teeth snarling white under the great fangs of his leopard mask. Spearless—that one was brave enough—he snarled rage and lashed out at King's neck with steel claws that flashed a vicious arc in the moon beam.

Just turned, King was off balance. The best that he could do was what a white man must do in a fight, duck close and clinch. The fellow's wrist, instead of his claws, smacked hard against King's jugular vein. And then he was King's meat. The claws raked King's back as King pressed close and drove his free fist at the man's diaphragm. The man retched an agonized grunt and fell away, doubled up with his hands to his belly and gasping. King ruthlessly speared him as he reeled.

And then, all of a sudden, the screeching, snarling fury of fight was gone. There were no more cats.

The moon flickered its pale tracery of shadows on an empty clearing. There was Ponsonby, looking about him in a dazed sort of manner. And there was Kaffa, insatiate, cautiously edging his way into the big house.

"One went in here," he explained over his shoulder. A moon patch on the door post showed the white of his little teeth and his rolling eyes, avid for the hunt.

"Out, you little fool!" King shouted at him. "Cut it out! That's too much of a chance!"

The little devil was too intent upon the hunt to obey.

"Nay, *Bwana.*" His voice came muffled from the doorway's blackness. "*Bwana* forgets that a Hottentot can see in the dark much better than any imitation leopard. Hold the door, till I chase him."

But the Hottentot did not chase the man out. Instead, there was a screech that lifted King's stomach up to his throat. And then Kaffa came out alone.

"It was easy," he said. "That would-be leopard was very much afraid."

King looked warily around. There was nothing. Even the jungle creatures crouched, silenced for the moment.

"Well then," King said. "Let's show our smartness by running like hell. You lead, Kaffa, to pick the path. You next, Ponsonby. I'm rear guard, though I'm thinking there'll hardly be any need."

There was little talking for an hour after that. But, as stinging thorn twigs sprang back in the broken light and raked faces, there was some cursing whole hearted enough to show that spirits rode high with the moon.

Clear out of the twisty thorn scrub at last, King asked: "How many did you, get, Apeling?"

"Only two, *Bwana.*" The Hottentot clucked dissatisfaction with himself. "For the two guards, taken unawares, can hardly count. But the one in the house should count as a good credit."

"Credit, rather, for your coming, Apeling, which will surely not be forgotten. And Ponsonby got one." King saw no cause for dissatisfaction. "Three to nine. How's that for a credit to white man superiority—when a good African helps? Anyway, I think it'll be some time before the remaining pair of leopards will reorganize the local union. Still, we'd better put ground between us. All you've got to worry about, now, Britisher, is that your feet hold out."

AT THE Ndolia mission was the wagon and the Masai, grinning and inhaling unnecessarily great quantities of snuff that made his eyes water. He spat into his two hands and knelt to lay them on his master's feet.

"When *Bwana* is washed and fed," he said, "the tale of the slaughter will be a good telling over the fire. And when *Bwana* is rested it will be well that we go back into that country and exact a vengeance for the insult."

But while the Bwanas splashed hot water over their naked bodies out of a five-gallon kerosene can under a tree, King grinned over to Ponsonby and said:

"Well, Britisher, I guess you've got a mouthful to tell your fat bosses about steel when you get back to your job."

Ponsonby's face remained stolidly serious.

"I have no job," he said. "I resigned from that, er—that sort of business while I was still a mouse in a cage."

"Good for you! That's something for congratulation."

"Thanks, old chap. And I'll tell you what." Ponsonby was characteristically diffident in the presence of money. It was effort to make himself say it.

"I have a few pounds saved up and, er—that is, if you don't mind, you know—I'd like to buy in your wagon load and get back in there and—" The absence of a monocle to polish embarrassed him horribly. "I'm sort of—what I mean, a fellow ought to go back and trade those chappies good steel for the stuff a fellow has shipped into them, what?"

"Hunh?" King stared.

"I mean it old man. New lamps for old, if you know what I mean. Sort of take over Vreedon's territory and, er—disinfect it, as you said."

Ponsonby's face was dripping water so that his expression was not entirely easy to read. But it seemed to King, if he could have believed the man capable of humor, that Ponsonby almost grinned through the wetness.

"That is to say, old top, if you have the patience to lead a tenderfoot back and—sort of break me into the new business."

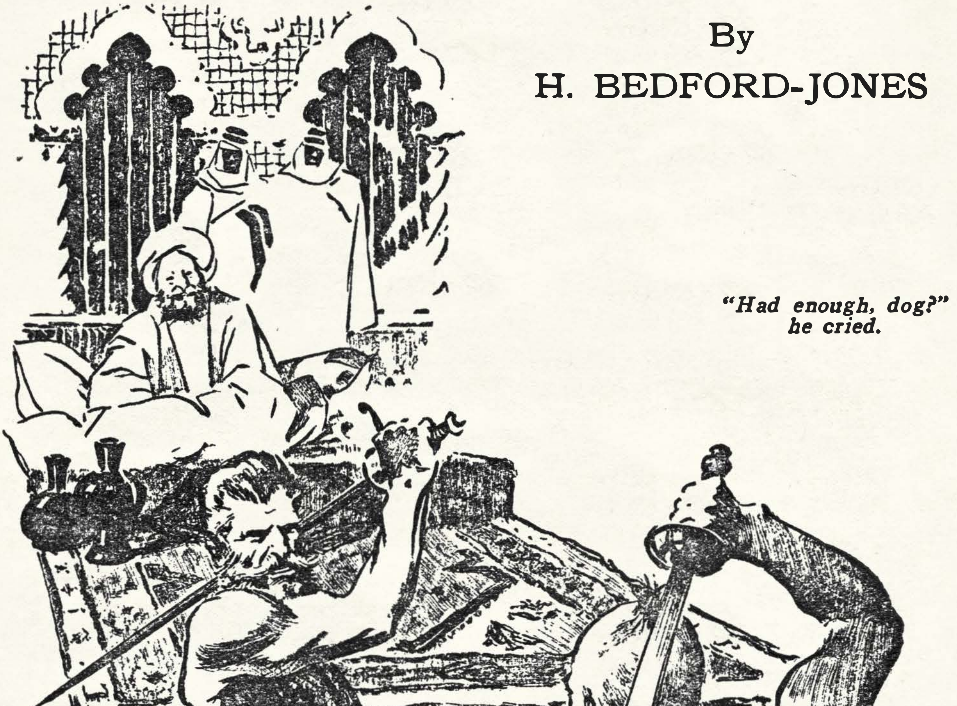
It was King who was serious.

"I think, old chappie," he said, "you're trying to spoof me. But—" He reached out a wet hand. "I figured you'd turn out useful. It's a deal."

J. SMITH, HIS MARK

By

H. BEDFORD-JONES



"Had enough, dog?" he cried.

MY FRIEND Goddard Becker, who is positively nuts about drums, bagpipes, fifes and other alleged musical instruments, looked up at me with a quizzical smile.

"Now I've really got something," said he, and pointed to a drum on his table. "Tell me what you make of that, and whether you ever heard of Millington Standish."

"Everybody's heard of him," I said. "He was the big Hollywood director who died last year."

"Right the first time. I bought the drum and something else from his estate sale."

The drum was queer enough, something like a long-tailed gourd in shape, but made of wood. The head widened out; the skin was a foot in diameter, and most peculiar in appearance. It was thick; it looked like pigskin but was not, and bore the ridges of old scars as though it came from some animal that had suffered in fight. It was very old, and blackened in one spot from long service.

I tapped it, and obtained an ugly, flat, thudding note. There was nothing to indicate origin except a plain cross within a circle, painted in blue on the wood and nearly obliterated by time and usage.

I shook my head. "Search me, Goddard. Looks like a drum to be held within a crooked knee by a sitting man, and tapped with the hand. Primitive, rudely made. What is it?"

"Good eye, Sherlock!" Goddard Becker laughed softly. "Millington Standish got it when he was in Morocco a few years ago. It came from the tomb of some holy man up in the Atlas, where it had hung for ages; that blue cross gives the clue. One of the tribal tattoo marks that the Berbers still use today. Well, Standish rather lost his head over this drum, for no apparent reason. With the drum, I bought a copy of a talkie he made just before his death. It was a complete flop, as nobody would release it. He had obviously spent a lot of money on it, for he had filmed it himself in Morocco."

"Then the drum comes from there?" I said. "Yet it doesn't look exactly Moorish—"

"Man, haven't I been telling you it's Berber?" he broke in impatiently. "It's part of the music that goes with Berber dancers, men who do a sort of thudding tap dance with their feet. One of the players holds this under his knee. But come along, and I'll run off the movie for you. It's about Captain John Smith."

He hustled me into a darkened room where he had a home movie outfit, talkie and all. As he got his paraphernalia ready, I voiced my astonished thought.

"Didn't you say it was about Morocco? But Captain John Smith was in Virginia."

"Rats!" said Goddard Becker. "He was a soldier of fortune. Fought against the Turks and killed three champions; he was captured and enslaved, and sent across Turkey up to the Caspian—and escaped via Russia. Next year, in 1604, he was in Morocco briefly, and even went to the capital, Marrakesh, to sell his sword."

I made a helpless gesture. "Goddard, I just don't get it at all. Christians didn't go to Morocco to find adventure; they were enslaved there—"

With patient resignation, Becker paused to set me aright, rather caustically.

"MY dear fellow, the world changes. At that period Morocco was open to all races and creeds except the Spaniards. The defeat of the Armada was celebrated tremendously in Marrakesh; English, Dutch, French, Italians abounded there. The sultans had a bodyguard of renegade Christians, and an entire foreign legion composed of Christians. Now lay aside your preconceived notions and take a dip into reality. See Captain John Smith as he was, a swaggering, pirating swashbuckler ready to take fire at a pretty face or whip out rapier at short notice, and always with an eye to the main chance—"

He switched off the lights, the silver screen across the room flickered and flashed, and there, abruptly, without any titles, leaped into life the man himself.

Young, genial, hard and brown as a berry, the finished soldier showed in the set of his head, the hang of his rapier, the flash of his eye. Behind the smiling good-humor of his features lay other qualities easy to read, and chiefly the cruel poise which bespeaks utter efficiency.

He was standing in a gorgeously tiled alcove off a court where a large fountain splashed. Before him, seated at a table heaped with papers, was a grave man with pointed beard in the French style; this was Sieur de Lisle, envoy of Henri IV of France and chief physician to Sultan Ahmed of Marrakesh.

"I got in yesterday from Safi, and I've come to you today," said Smith, who spoke French, Turkish and other tongues at will. "You have my papers, my passport and a letter from Prince Sigismund of Transylvania. You know what I want. You know that I came here with Captain St. Jean of the ship *Provence*, now at Safi—"

"Sit down, my dear Captain," said the Frenchman, smiling. He clapped his hands and a slave brought in a tray, with wine and Venice glasses. "Yes. I was talking last night with M. St. Jean, who is also seeking a bit of adventure. Come, sit down, compose yourself and let us sample this very good wine of Xeres."

John Smith did not say no to that. He kicked a big stuffed leather seat toward the desk, perched himself on it, and smacked his lips over as fine a sherry as ever he had tasted. The older man went on, cautiously.

"St. Jean told me something of your adventures by sea and land, more than your own modesty has brought to my attention. Now turn your mind to this country. Seven years ago died the great sultan El Mansur, who conquered all the interior beyond the Niger, who built the magnificent buildings you have glimpsed, who brought into Marrakesh riches beyond compare. How? By his war machine, chiefly his legion of renegades armed with muskets, and his foreign legion. In their hands rests the power today.

"Here in Marrakesh rules Ahmed, one of El Mansur's sons; an intelligent fellow, but a drunken, debauched tyrant. Another son, Zidan, rules in Fez. Still other sons seek power. Everywhere is war, bloodshed, anarchy. The Berbers, who have never bowed to Moorish rule, number hundreds of thousands; with them the war is merciless and eternal. You can see Berber heads piled by the hundred in every market place. Faction fights faction. Even we Christians, French and English and Dutch, fight each other for the spoils of commerce. Murder, pillage, tyranny are on all sides. To whom shall I advise that you offer your sword?"

"Since might makes right in this bloody land," said Smith promptly, "to the one best able to pay for my services."

Sieur de Lisle laughed heartily at this reply.

"Well said! Will you take my advice?"

"If it accords with my disposition, yes."

"Then spend three days as my guest; all Christians lodge here in the Mellah, or Ghetto. On the fourth day the sultan, who is away hunting, will be back, and I'll take you to him in the Dar el Bedi palace, the most beautiful house in the world, built by El Mansure of pure Carrera marble from Italy. There you'll see such lavish treasure and beauty as exist nowhere else on this earth. I'd better give you a guide and guardian, in the person of a renegade officer."

Smith's eyes hardened. "There are two things, Sieur de Lisle, which irritate my soul. One is a renegade of any sort; the other is an assassin who knows the knife rather than the sword. I find too many of each variety in this country of yours."

"So?" The other nodded and shrugged lightly. "As you like. I'll put you in charge of Jan Guilder, then; he's an amiable Hollander who serves in the foreign legion. Have another glass of wine, while I send for him."

SO IT happened that Captain John Smith, late a colonel in the Hungarian service and with plenty of Hungarian gold still clinking in his belt, sallied forth to see what might be seen of the bloodiest city on earth. He was in good company. Jan Guilder had been here twelve years, knew all the ropes, and behind his amiable Dutch grin had the thirst of a Tantalus and the heart of a Hercules, with the muscle to correspond.

Fate must have laughed to see them, thus paired. Guilder was no angel, but a perverse destiny ruled John Smith. Wherever he went, trouble swooped. If he took ship, that ship fell foul of battle or turned to piracy, and all in a big way. If he marched afield, the very earth would run blood wheresoever his march tended, and not in mere skirmish either.

This was not his fault, of course; neither did he believe in refusing whatever gifts the gods of war and love might send.

With Jan Guilder he got on famously. In five minutes they were friends; in an hour, intimate companions; by nightfall, sworn brethren. The good wine helped not a little. In that day Morocco had largely forgotten all tenets of the Prophet except plurality of wives.

This was, as it chanced, a Friday, the one day in the week when all women in the land went abroad to visit the cemeteries and pray for the dead, and gossip freely and even visit their friends. They went wrapped to the eyes, literally, and well guarded; but in Moslem lands there is more than one way, as the saying goes, to bake a cake. Thus, along in the late afternoon, Jan Guilder undertook to display his knowledge of the local world and show the Englishman a rope or two.

It really started after they left the gates of the palace, where fourteen hundred goldsmiths occupied one bazar, and headed for the Djama el Fna, that enormous, teeming, open-air "place of blood" where pulsed the life of four hundred thousand inhabitants of this city. Here were terrific odors; piles of heads or hands on the ground or adorning the walls in strings, cattle, slaves, camels. Here men lived or died in the sight of all. Death and blood, torture and maiming, were scarcely noted in this city, except in the case of slaves, who were worth money. Yet even slaves were dirt cheap just now.

A man, magnificently arrayed in the richest native garments, a gold-hafted knife dangling on his neck-cord and a sword clanking on a golden girdle, halted and spoke to Jan Guilder. He was a big man, and had red hair and enormous red beard and mustaches, and glittering blue eyes of pale cruelty. He spat a word and a laugh at Guilder, then swaggered away, and Smith could tell the jest held the scent of blood.

"Who was that?" he asked.

"Captain Evelyn Leigh, an Englishman. He's an officer in the renegade bodyguard."

Guilder said no more, and John Smith asked no more; a man's business is his own affair.

"Ah!" said he pleasantly. "If I like one renegade less than another, it would be an Englishman. So this is your famous place of blood, eh? They told me about it, on the way here. It smells the name."

"Come."

Jan Guilder quickened his pace. He drew Smith through the serried throngs, the dust and heat, the multitudinous raucous outcries, to a corner niche in a boundary wall where a troupe of acrobats from the Sous were performing to a crowd. Not at them did he look, but at the files and masses of women trooping past, their faces muffled until only one eye showed. The only spot of color they displayed was in the slippers, and these were of every hue under the sun.

Guilder wore European garb, with a dazzling white jellab over it, and coral-studded knife and sword. He stood out; but John Smith, with his plumed cavalier's hat and his slashed deep blue sateens, his jeweled buckles and golden rapier hilt, stood out far beyond any cowl-hooded giant. He looked what he was, debonair, alive with youth yet keenly efficient, and the shuffling one-eyed shapes turned as they passed his curious gaze to glance back at him; whether they were young or old, none could tell.

A huge black Sudanese, shepherding a flock of cloaked women, gave Guilder a nod and paused for a word. Guilder spoke under his breath. The Sudanese flung a glance at John Smith and grinned, and made response, then went on.

Laughing, the Dutchman turned and took Smith's arm.

"Come along, comrade! My throat's dry. The errand's done—tell you later. I know where we can get wine and see some Berber dancing; a Spanish renegade keeps the place."

"Wine?" echoed Smith, with a look at the westering sun. "Best think about food, hadn't we?"

"That's thought of already," and Guilder roared with laughter as he shouldered into the crowds.

The place was a low-roofed, evil little hallway, where blacks and Moors sat over sherbets or coffee, and it had a raised platform at one end. Here half a dozen players drew weird music from flutes and drums, while on the platform of poles danced a number of Berbers—a thudding, heavy-footed dance that threatened to break their bones at each step.

Jan Guilder spoke with the slattern renegade, who came to them with a couple of bottles of wine and pewter cups, and left them alone. Guilder clicked cups with Smith and winked.

"To the best dinner in Morocco, in an hour's time! We'll stop at my place, leave your hat, throw a jellab over you to hide your unshaven head, and none will pay any heed. And then for the sultan's palace itself—if you dare the venture!"

John Smith drank, wiped his lips, and nodded. "For dinner?"

"For more, my innocent! I've a friend there, if you must understand, and you were seen yesterday as you wandered about at sunset. The palace knows a lot about you already. I promise nothing except a full belly and a spice of peril. That Sudanese is my man, however, so the gamble's a good one."

"Done," said John Smith promptly.

HE DRANK, but he kept his eyes open. Amid riotous applause, the Berbers ceased their performance. One of them came down to collect money from the assemblage. Under his right arm was a drum—not unlike an elongated gourd, it was, with a very wide head. He was a tall man, and on his forehead was tattooed in blue a cross within a circle. He could move only slowly, by reason of some infirmity in his legs, and his ears were gone, and his right hand was gone; with his left, he passed the bowl for money.

Smith noted that his companion watched this man intently.

"Who is he, Jan?"

"Eh? Oh, in other days he was a Berber chief; now he has nothing. They hamstrung him, lopped off his hand and his ears, and mutilated him otherwise; his daughter was put into the harem of the sultan. With luck, you'll see her tonight."

Guilder spoke easily, but his tone betrayed suppressed emotion. John Smith watched. The Berber came close, turned to them. Jan Guilder put some coins into his bowl and spoke rapidly. The Berber answered; they spoke the Shleu tongue of the Berbers, which none of the Moors could understand.

Suddenly the Berber shouted something at his companions. A roar of laughter went up. It was echoed by those around. With another laugh, the Berber handed his drum to Guilder, who slung the cord of it about his neck and passed over more coins. Amid renewed mirth, the mutilated Berber went on, completely ignoring the two companions hereafter.

John Smith shrewdly drank his wine and asked no questions.

"I bought his drum—that's the joke," explained Jan Guilder.

"More of a joke than it appears to be," said Captain John Smith, and the Dutchman gave him a quick, sharp look.

"Yes. Wait."

The sun was down. They finished the wine, unhurried, and shared a huge water-pipe with a chunk of charcoal above the tobacco. Eyes on the bubbling smoke, Jan Guilder spoke under his breath, and Smith's blood suddenly sang to the comprehension of intrigue and service and danger.

In that drum, about the Dutchman's neck, lay death. This mutilated Berber, whose daughter was one of the two hundred wives of Sultan Ahmed, had arranged matters with the Sudanese eunuch. Jan Guilder had been enabled to carry on his affair with another lady of the palace, no hard matter when the sultan and his entire court were away. In return, Jan had agreed to deliver this drum to the Berber girl, whose name was Zair; within the hollow wood could be concealed many things. What? Jan Guilder shrugged to the query. Poison, perhaps; messages; money—who could say?

"This sultan of ours is a debauched and drunken tyrant," said Guilder, almost in the words of Sieur de Lisle. "He murders freely. Even his greatest lords are slain in a moment and their families enslaved. He has no heart; he is worthless, like all sons of great men. One day he'll die by knife or poison, and the renegade bodyguard, who hold the power already, will rule in Marrakesh like the Praetorians in ancient Rome—you'll see! The sultan lavishes wealth and women on them, and in their hearts they despise him."

"No good man to work for," said Captain John Smith thoughtfully. "When do we go?"

"Now; the night is at hand."

HALF an hour later, after a call at the Dutchman's lodgings, they entered the most beautiful house in the world by a tiny side entrance the merchants used, where the Sudanese met them. They slapped along in green and black slippers, and dark-cowled jellabs that covered them from head to heels, hiding the European garments.

John Smith had seen everything between Spain and Astrakhan, between Moscow and Vienna; never had he seen such an edifice as this. During fourteen years, El Mansur had built it, paying for the Italian marble in sugar, pound for pound; flinging into it all the treasure of Africa, collecting the greatest artisans and architects of Islam and of Europe to create beauty.

The vast chambers were of the peculiar Moorish plaster carving, one of the great arts of the world. Solid gold was everywhere—on the pilasters of columns, on the carven ceilings, on the fountains. Gems glittered in the hanging lamps and on the walls. Marble was wrought into delicate lace tracery. The rugs, the appointments, were the most beautiful the world could supply. Everywhere was beauty, beauty, beauty, until the heart sang and the soul ached with it; a superhuman and glorious beauty, created by a man of intense vision, now fallen beneath the feet of swine.

Smith followed on, dazzled and wondering, and came to rest in one of two small rooms, divided from each other and from a courtyard where fountains splashed, by hanging curtains. This one contained only a divan, and heaps of cushions. The floor was of black marble, the ceiling of carved and painted cedar; the walls were of Persian tiles, a royal golden yellow, and upon them were depicted hunting scenes of the Persian kings. Jan Guilder spoke with the Sudanese, who went out and then turned to the Englishman.

"Get rid of your jellab; be comfortable!" he said, and stretched himself on the cushions. "All's well. Two of his personal slaves, deaf mutes, will serve us. You'd better take this drum and give it to Zair herself, when she comes. She'll like that."

"And you?"

Jan grinned. "Wait and see. I don't intend to waste my time, comrade. In this land, one may be dead by morning, so waste not the present hour!"

Two blacks entered, bearing water and towels for ablutions; then they brought in a stand, and kettle after kettle to set upon the stand. Each kettle was of burnished silver, and each contained dishes a-swim—fowl and meats, cous-cous, other things unknown. There were goblets of Venice glass, and wine from the sultan's bins; it was wine such as only a sultan could command, in defiance of Allah. And John Smith made the most of everything, as did Jan Guilder, in uproarious delight. Last came water and towels again, and more wine.

Then a water-pipe, with two tubes, was brought in, and Jan Guilder rose.

"Comrade, tonight we've eaten like kings!" said he, and winked. "A pipe awaits me in the next room; make the most of the drum, and of its luck! See you later."

And with another hearty laugh, he was gone past the curtain.

The other curtain, that on the patio side, waved, moved; a veiled figure slipped in and dropped on a cushion. Smith, somewhat bewildered, rose and bowed. A silvery laugh came from behind the veil, and a voice. The words were strange. The laugh ended, and an imperious gesture reached out toward the drum.

Smith caught it up and held it tight. "Zair," said he. "Zair."

Low passionate entreaty poured from behind the veil; he shook his head and motioned. Remembering his Turkish, he broke into it. The girl understood, and spoke Arabic; they could get on. She laughed again, and lowered her veil, and reached out her hand. Smith kissed it. She drew back angrily, but her glorious eyes warmed upon him, and she took up a mouthpiece of the pipe. He followed suit, lost in dream. Her beauty was intoxicating, and what he could read in her eyes set his heart hammering. Captain John Smith was no saint, and glad of it.

After some time, he put the drum in her hands, but by now she was thinking of other matters than drums. That was why he gave it to her.

Upon her forehead was tattooed a blue cross within a circle.

They smoked, they talked; they laughed together, and found in one another a kindred spirit. About this Berber girl was nothing furtive. Rather, Smith divined in her a high and flaming pride, a greatness of soul, that captivated him. He knew just enough of her story, of this palace and its occupants, to guess a thousand things more. He was touching the outer circle of passionate lives and dim bloody mysteries that plucked at his imagination. From the next room came the soft murmurs of a woman, and, occasionally, the hearty laugh of Jan Guilder.

How much more did he, intrepid warrior from afar, evoke answer from this wild creature of the Atlas, prisoned in the glorious palace of lust and debauchery! All she had lost for ever was personified in this man of steel, with the laughing eager eyes and their unafraid eagerness for life.

Smith's lips were upon hers, when from the adjoining room came one awful choked wail of terror, followed by an outburst of voices. Like a flash, Zair was out of his arms and up, snatching the drum, striking with it at the hanging lamp. The crash of glass was lost in the noise; darkness fell upon the room even before Smith could find his feet. Then she caught at him, clinging to him, breathing a word at his ear.

"Quiet, quiet! For the love of Allah—quiet!"

He checked his confused impulses. Suddenly the curtain that divided the rooms was torn away by a falling body. There was a crash. Light streamed upon Jan Guilder, fallen face down, dead, with blood gushing over the back of his white shirt. And in the other room, a terrified woman shrinking into a corner, and the stalwart figure of Captain Evelyn Leigh, bloody knife in hand, with grinning shapes of men at his back.

"Quickly! They've not seen us—"

Realization flashed upon him, as she drew him away. Jan was dead, stabbed in the back. Out steel and at them—quiet, fool, quiet! Jan was dead. Vengeance would only end in his own death. This damned English—

All in a split second. Hot of head was Captain John Smith, but his absolute efficiency and his iron will seldom yielded to impulse; now he mastered himself, and let the girl's hand lead him to the curtained entrance of the courtyard. Those others had not seen him and her. He even caught up the dark jellab and flung it over his head.

THE patio was dimly lit. Smith was aware of hot rising voices, of running figures; Zair's hand drew him into another alcove, thence to a doorway and a passage. He plunged after her blindly, himself in a tumultuous riot of emotions.

They came out into a garden, rich with the heavy scent of orange-trees, starlight glimmering above. Then to the same tiny gate in the wall, by which he had entered; no guards were in sight, but from the palace was growing an increasing sound of voices and alarm. At the gate, Zair paused and turned to him. They clung together for a long moment, lips to lips; then she drew away.

"Go, go! I will send word—by the sultan's physician. Allah keep you!"

He found himself out in the street, out in another world, stumbling along past the open but screened doors of the Mosque of El Mansur. Upon him broke a crash of musketry, and ringing yells. He knew what it was—the night guard, emptying their muskets in the Djema el Fna, the place of blood, to mark the midnight hour. Midnight, and Jan Guilder dead with a knife plunged in his back.

"By God!" sobbed Captain John Smith devoutly. "By God his help, I'll pay out that English dog before I leave this accursed land!"

He found the Mellah at last, and the guards admitted him, and so he got back whole to the quarters of Sieur de Lisle; but he was long in finding sleep, with the faces of Jan and the girl Zair drifting in his memory.

Next day, walking with Sieur de Lisle, he saw Jan Guilder's head spiked in the palace of blood. The grave Frenchman, little guessing John Smith's share in the matter, shook his head soberly.

"Poor fellow! I hear he was caught in some intrigue. *Pardieu!* A good thing you were not with him. I should have given you a better companion, Captain. However, I learn that the sultan will be back tomorrow, a day ahead of time. We shall see him tomorrow evening of a certainty."

Smith said nothing, but looked up at the dead face of Jan Guilder, and turned pale, and not with fear.

He kept close, after this; he could not trust himself to walk abroad, lest he encounter that renegade with the red beard. In such case, he knew, he must lose his head completely. Besides, he was awaiting word from Zair. And on the morrow, it came.

Sultan Ahmed rode into Marrakesh with a long procession, with gunfire and guards and a scarlet umbrella, with shouting and pretended rejoicings. An hour or two after, Sieur de Lisle summoned Smith, who found his host anything but joyous.

"I've just come from the palace," said the Frenchman, eyeing Smith keenly, "where I was given a message concerning you. First, we go tonight to dine with the sultan. Ahmed delights in foreign soldiers; he wants to hear from you about the Turkish wars. It seems that you're pretty well known in the palace already. And now, prepare yourself."

"That is needless," said Captain John Smith. "I'm already hungry."

"I'm not jesting," the other replied sternly. "Whether you had some part in the affair of Jan Guilder, I'm not asking; I don't want to know. Jan was lucky in dying so quickly. Had he lived, he would have been torn apart by horses, or set on a stake to die slowly with his hands slashed, heaped with salt, and sewn in rawhide. But I suspect the worst, my friend. Tonight you will be given the chance you have sought."

"The chance?"

"Precisely. Palace intrigue has been at work, it seems; I was warned that you'd be offered a captaincy in the foreign legion and a post in the palace itself, provided the sultan took a fancy to you. This information, I may say, came from Berber sources."

Smith swallowed hard and forced himself to meet the stern, curious gaze with impassive features. In a flash, he knew that Zair and her friends had been at work.

"There is no question of my becoming a renegade?" he asked.

"No. Renegades have power, but they are not relished by many Moors—in fact, the sultan himself despises them. No: here at one stroke you'll be offered wealth and position, a chance at the immense palace graft, anything you like!"

Smith's pulses leaped. More than all these was being offered, he knew well: and no doubt the Frenchman suspected as much.

"You'd advise me to accept?" he asked quietly. Sieur de Lisle shrugged.

"Captain Smeeth, each man must seek his own destiny. You are, I think, able to stand on your own feet."

This was perfectly true. At thought of the lips of the girl Zair, Smith's pulses leaped again; but his head was cool except when the memory of Jan Guilder's head rose in his mind. Then his palms began to sweat, and everything shook within him.

That evening, after the sunset prayer, he found himself again in that glorious palace, together with Sieur de Lisle, two Dutchmen, and a London merchant who kept the sultan provided with powder from England. From these others he was soon separated, going with Lisle to the very presence of the sultan himself, in a huge alcove off the central court, whose walls blazed with gold and gems.

THERE he was presented to the sultan. Ahmed was a bearded, powerful man, full of laughter, with cruelly voluptuous eyes and a weak mouth. He was extremely affable, but ate by himself. Other kettles were placed for his caids and chief officers, among whom was Captain Evelyn Leigh, who wore an Arab name assumed with his new religion. Still other kettles were placed for Lisle and Captain John Smith.

The utter debauchery of this meal was an eye-opener to the Englishman. Wine was plentiful; fat damsels and effeminate youths danced and performed to the music of flutes and fiddles; the place roared with obscene jests which Smith did not even comprehend. Of a sudden, Ahmed summoned him and Lisle, cutting short the performance. They sat, by command, in front of the sultan and Captain John Smith gave the tale of his adventures, with Lisle acting as interpreter.

The sultan was interested, both in him and in his story. He roared heartily over some of Smith's relations, which were better left unprinted, and showed keen curiosity about Stamboul and other cities.

The account of how Smith had killed the three Turkish champions and had been granted the three heads for his coat of arms kindled the Moor to delight.

"By Allah and Allah, you are a proper soldier!" he cried, and twisted from his finger a ring, which held a remarkably large but poor emerald. "Here, infidel, take this in token of my friendship! And now ask what you like from me. Ask from me your heart's desire, and by the beard of the Prophet, it shall be granted!"

When Lisle interpreted this, Captain John Smith sat up a little straighter, and his eye hardened. He was aware of the caids and officials watching him curiously. He was aware of others also, and deliberately he glanced around and met the gaze of Evelyn Leigh for one instant. He knew perfectly well that he was supposed to ask for money and a post, and that it would be granted him on the spot.

Instead he broke into his fumbling Turkish, which was well enough understood. He would not trust Sieur de Lisle to interpret his words here.

"Sword of Allah, descendant of the Prophet, Light of the world!" he said fulsomely. "I have but one desire; it is so slight a thing, amid all this glorious beauty, that I fear to voice it to thy great majesty."

"Fool that you are, let me talk!" shot out Lisle under his breath. Smith ignored him. His Turkish brought exclamations from those around, and drew a wide grin to Ahmed's lips. He addressed Smith directly.

"Come, soldier, name your desire! I have sworn to grant it."

"Why, then," said Smith, with a jerk of his thumb toward Evelyn Leigh, "I should like to meet this renegade, sword in hand, before I leave Morocco to return to my own country, which was once his country. To meet him, with no quarter given."

Now there fell silence, and upon the silence came Sieur de Lisle's mutter.

"Thrice fool that you are! You've tossed away fame and fortune. You might have had a whole province and have become a pasha!"

"Better poverty in England than riches in Morocco," snapped Smith.

The silence endured. Sultan Ahmed, who had drunk well but not too deeply, broke into a slow grin and looked at the renegade, calling him by his Arab name.

"Well, Abdallah, do you fear to fight this man from your own land?"

"I fear only your displeasure if I kill him," responded Captain Leigh. The sultan slapped his thigh in delight, his eyes shining with anticipation.

"Good! Clear the floor! To it, to it!" he cried out. "As Allah liveth, it shall be here and now! Let us see how this infidel bears out his words with deeds!"

Smith rose and flung off his upper garments. His sword, which had been taken at the gate, was brought to him. Evelyn Leigh flung off his jellab and shirt, and both men were naked to the waist. Leigh's head was shaved, Moorish fashion, except for the one tuft of hair by which the angel would jerk him to paradise on the Last Day. For a moment, he and John Smith regarded each other steadily.

"So!" said Leigh in English. "I thought there was something more than I discovered, the other night."

"Indeed?" Smith looked into those pale, terrible eyes, and laughed. "No knife in the back this night, you dog!"

That was all; but each man knew everything, in those words.

THE tiled floor was cleared, from the alcove out to the fountain in the court. Across the patio was a stir and a flutter. There, high up, were lattices of cedarwood, where the women of the court could observe, unseen, whatever passed below. For one instant John Smith looked up at those lattices, and flung up his sword in salute; for him, it was a mute farewell to all that might have been. Then he was facing around.

"To work!" A shout of delight broke from the sultan. "To work, in the name of Allah!"

"Rather, in that of Jan Guilder," said Smith softly, in English, and the blades met.

Fencing did not exist in that day; it was cut and parry, thrust and thrust again, with eye and wrist in play at will. Despite his red beard and mustaches, Leigh was no hairy marvel. His torso was white and broad, and all one ripple of brawny muscle; the strength of arm and shoulder was immense. Smith was smaller; but there was something deadly in his tense features, his mustache brushed straight out, and the incredible agility with which he now moved.

This agility was of mind and body alike. If he could handle a ship against a whole fleet, a horse or a sword against a dozen opponents, he could do more; against a single man he was dazzling—and now he had need of all his skill, for Leigh attacked furiously. He remained wholly on the defensive, but his rapier was like a white flame in the air, and roars of applause broke forth at each crisis fended away. When a leap saved his throat and Leigh's point left a gout of blood on his chest, the roars redoubled.

Wagers were being made at top voice by sultan and courtiers. Leigh, drawing back, laughed suddenly.

"Your head will hang beside the Dutchman's tomorrow!"

"That morrow will never come," said Smith, panting a little. "It's a worse fate to be alive than dead in this land; you'll remain alive, renegade."

Abruptly, he attacked for the first time. And now fell stark silence, broken only by the pad-pad of bare feet on the tiles, and the clash of steel, and hot gusty breaths and oaths.

For this attack was almost swifter than eye could follow, yet every man there was a swordsman and knew the wonder of it.

Leigh fought desperately. Not point alone, but edge and point were both in play; the pale glitter of the renegade's eyes dwelt upon the tense ferocity of Smith's face, and Leigh backed and backed. Suddenly Smith struck and leaped away. Leigh staggered. Something dropped down to the tiles, and a gush of blood ran down his neck. His left ear was clean gone, and the watchers burst into wild yells.

Smith's rapier fell. It pricked into the fallen ear, and with a twist of his wrist Smith sent the ear hurtling at Leigh.

"Had enough, dog?" he cried.

For answer, the renegade rushed at him furiously, with cut and slash and storming oaths. Smith gave not, but met the rush with so deadly a point that the other was halted; then to attack once more, rapid beyond belief— Another slash, and a leap away. Leigh's right ear, lopped clean away like the first, tumbled on the tiles.

Here was master sword play, and Sultan Ahmed yelled wild applause. But Leigh, fright leaping in his eyes, backed as John Smith bore in upon him; backed with cautious defence, until he was standing before a huge pillar and could back no farther. His defence weakened obviously. Great gasping breaths tore at his lungs.

"Kill! Kill!" swept up the wild voices. The renegade knew himself lost, and echoed the word in wild despair.

"Have done! Kill and have done, damn you!"

"Not I," said Captain John Smith, and lunged.

A red streak sprang upon Leigh's chest. He fought on, doggedly, having no lack of heart, but strength had gone out of his arm and in no wise could he match the dazzling thrusts and slashes that beat upon him. He fought as one who knows the effort useless, and repeatedly Smith's point reached his chest, yet never penetrated beyond the skin. Delicately, lightly, the steel reached in and out. The clashing steel met and parted again; each time, Smith's point touched the broad chest, until it was a great smear of blood.

All watched, fascinated, silent now. It was evident that Smith could kill the other man at will; it was equally evident that he had some other motive. Leigh, panting terribly, stood against the pillar in hopeless desperation. Now Smith drew back, and with his rapier plucked the other's shirt from the pile of garments at one side. He thrust it at Leigh.

"Wipe your chest, renegade!"

Almost mechanically, Leigh took the shirt and swept it across his bloody chest, wiped his sweat-streaming face—suddenly flung himself forward in unwarned attack. Almost did he win all in this desperate throw. His sword drove home, indeed, but Smith writhed away so that the steel merely slashed his ribs.

With this, he flung himself at Leigh. He beat aside that feeble blade, to cut and cut again; his point drove in and out, slashed lightly, and slashed again. With one quick hoarse laugh, he hammered aside the other's guard, threw up his sword, and drove in with the hilt. Struck between the eyes, Leigh flung out his arms, quivered, and collapsed.

"Water!" With the panting cry, Smith turned. "Water! Wash him, quickly!"

Amid the uproar, a slave caught his words and came forward with an ewer and a towel. Smith helped him. Curious, the sultan came to look on, the others crowded around, as that slashed chest was laid bare and the blood wiped off. A shout of comprehension broke from Sieur de Lisle, who turned to the sultan and made hasty explanations.

Murmurs of awed wonder arose. Sultan Ahmed gasped, then understood. Clear and fine on the renegade's chest stood out the slashed initials "J.S."

"Not bad," said Captain John Smith complacently. "Not bad. He's got something to remember me by, and lost his ears to boot—"

Everything flickered. The scene vanished; the screen became a flashing white. The film was ended. Apparently Middleton Standish had never quite finished his work.

I sat silent, staring at Goddard Becker. He had switched on the lights.

"You haven't finished the story yet," said he, motioning to the drum that lay on the table. "You'll have to finish it for yourself. But there's a suggestion. I told you this drum came from a Berber marabout—the shrine of a holy man. How it got there, I don't know. But I have an idea or two. So will you, if you hold the drum level with the light, and look at the skin."

I held it up, turned it, checked myself. The light broke level across the queerly ridged skin, and before my eyes those ancient scars took on shape and meaning. There, as one might slash them with a knife or a sword-point, stood out the letters "J S", clear as could be. Clear as the blue cross in a circle, painted on the wood.

"John Smith, his mark," said Goddard Becker. "Now you see why it looks like pigskin."

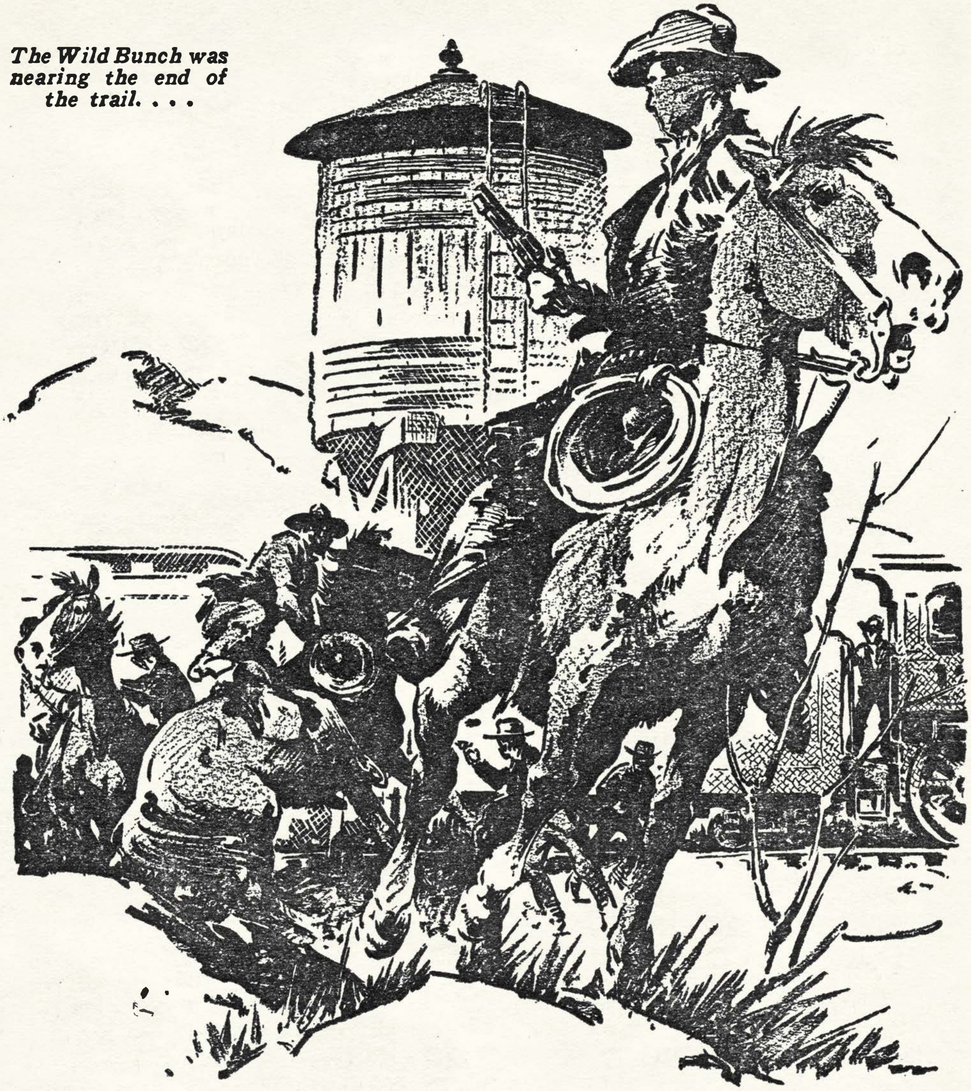
IN THE JUNE ISSUE
ERLE STANLEY GARDNER has written a gripping novel-length thriller with a Chinatown background—*Tong Trouble*—in which Ed Jenkins, better known as the Phantom Crook, plays nemesis to the little group of assorted villains who tried to foment a hatchet-war between the Hop Sings and the Bing K'ungs. JOHN LAWRENCE contributes a Broadway Squad story, *Body of Evidence.*

ROGER TORREY brings you a smashing novelette, *Too Many Angels*, and H. H. STINSON, creator of that nonesuch newshound O'Hara, will be present with *Clamp Down.* Plus other thrill packed stories and interesting features. . . .

BLACK MASK

On Sale Now!

The Wild Bunch was nearing the end of the trail. . . .



STICK 'EM UP!

A FACT STORY

By WILLIAM MacLEOD RAINE

DURING the generation following the Civil War, a profitable vocation seems to have been train robbery, with bank stick-ups as as sideline. The occupation had two drawbacks. Those who did well at it could not keep their easily acquired wealth from slipping swiftly through their fingers. The second disadvantage was more serious. Night riders who took up the business did not live long. Nine out of ten of them came to sudden and violent ends.

The first eminent practitioners of the "Hands up!" fraternity were Jesse James and his gang. In spite of efforts to make a Robin Hood out of him, this bandit leader was a cold-blooded killer who had learned, under Quantrell, utter ruthlessness. His associates, the Youngers, held more closely to the code of the frontier, to the clan spirit which taught a man to "go through" for his comrades.

After a dozen daring and successful bank and train robberies, the James-Younger outlaws made the mistake of leaving their own terrain to rob a bank in Minnesota, five hundred miles from the district they knew, with the thickly settled state of Iowa between the scene of the hold-up and home. The adventure probably would have come to grief in any case, but the cashier of the bank, J. L. Haywood, gave his life to make failure certain.

There were eight of the robbers. The two James brothers and Bob Younger went into the bank to get the money. Jim Younger and Pitts guarded a bridge across which they had to retreat. Chadwell, Miller, and Cole Younger stayed with the horses and watched the street.

Though they had twice before this killed bank cashiers during hold-ups—at Liberty and at Gallatin, both in Missouri—the raiders expected no trouble at Northfield. But when Frank James ordered Haywood to open the safe the cashier faced him boldly and refused.

"We'll kill you if you don't," Jesse warned.

"I know that, but I won't help you if I die for it," the obstinate man flung back.*

He was shot down instantly. The teller bolted for a side door, was hit in the shoulder, but made his escape.

In the building opposite the bank a Doctor Wheeler had his office. He was a hunter, and from a rack he picked up a gun loaded for big game. Through the office window he began firing. His first shot dropped Bill Chadwell from the saddle. He sent a bullet tearing into Pitts and, when the bandits in the bank came out, wounded Bob Younger.

Word spread like a prairie fire that there was a bank hold-up. Men snatched up their rifles—for this was close to a game country, where most of these pioneers hunted—and peppered at the outlaws from doors and street corners. With the exception of the James brothers every man in the gang was hit. The robbers clattered out of town, leaving their dead behind them. Far out on the prairie they pulled up to tie to their saddles the sagging bodies of those who were worst hurt.

The fugitives reached Mankato, greatly hampered in their flight by the desperate condition of Bob Younger. Jesse James made a callous proposal to Cole Younger.

"Bob is going to die anyhow," he said. "We'll be caught if we stay with him. Let's finish the job they started in town. He'll be out of his misery then."

Cole looked at him, chill anger in his eyes. "Go ahead and save yourself if you like. Jim and I are sticking with Bob."

The bandits separated. Frank and Jesse James rode away. Cole Miller elected to stay with the Youngers. Perhaps he was afraid that his wounds might hamper him and Jesse would rid himself of the encumbrance. After half a dozen close calls Frank and Jesse reached Missouri.

The pursuit centered on the rear guard of the robbers. The Youngers and Miller hid in a swampy wood to spend the night. When morning broke they realized they were surrounded.

All day the battle lasted, four hundred against four. Miller exposed himself to get a better shot. A bullet crashed into his head. Jim and Cole were both hit again. Bob was in very bad condition. Cole talked the situation over with Jim. They tied a white handkerchief to the barrel of a rifle and surrendered.

They were tried and given life in the Minnesota penitentiary. When I was a college boy selling books at Stillwater I visited the prison and saw them. Cole was librarian. He was soft-voiced and gentle of manner. Only the steadiness of the steel-barred eyes gave hint of the manner of man he was.

After twenty-five years Cole and Jim were pardoned. Bob had died in prison. He never fully recovered from his wounds. Outside the walls of the prison Jim found no place for him. He shot himself. Cole had been converted to religion. He lived the rest of his life quietly. Occasionally he preached, his own misspent life the text.

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*The assistant cashier testified to the words at the coroner's inquest.

Long before this time Jesse James had been treacherously killed by one of his band, Bob Ford, who in turn was shot down at Creede, Colorado, by "Red" O'Kelley without warning. Charley Ford committed suicide. Only Frank James was left to be stared at by weak-minded admirers.

OF THE Collins-Bass gang, Heffridge, Collins, Berry, Bass, and Barnes went out to the sound of roaring guns in the hands of law officers. The others slipped away into obscurity. The proportionate mortality in the Dalton-Doolin gang was even greater. With the settling up of the country and the coming of the rural telephone, chances for escape were constantly diminishing. Oklahoma and the Indian Territory were still wild rough country, but the deputy United States marshals knew the Cherokee Strip almost as well as the bandits. Such officers as Bill Tilghman, Heck Thomas, Chris Madsen, and Bud Ledbetter were first-class trailers, expert shots, and game to the core. They were the leaders of a group who stamped out the bad man and made law respected in the border land.

The Daltons were cousins to the Youngers, and in spite of their wild lawlessness were far removed from the Jesse James type of outlaw. None of them were killers from choice, except as this was forced on them from their manner of life. Daring and reckless frontiersmen, when guns came out they fought in the open to kill to insure their own safety, but in all their long record there is no evidence of cold-blooded murder or treachery.

Louis and Adeline Dalton had fifteen children. They were a stalwart, outdoor breed. The daughters married neighboring farmers. Some of the sons took up land, married, and lived close to the soil, good citizens all the days of their lives. But five of the boys had the love of adventure stirring unquenchably in their blood. The legends which had gathered around their notorious cousins and the still better known James brothers were part of the family heritage. As youngsters they had seen Jesse James on their place. After his death the favorite horse of the outlaw chief came into the possession of the boys.

Like their neighbors, the Daltons ran cattle. All the lads were cowboys. They rode the range with other hardy cow hands, all good riders and excellent shots. Working on the Bar-X-Bar and the neighboring Turkey Track ranch were Bill Powers, George Newcomb, Charley Bryant, Dick Broadwell, Charley Pierce and Bill Doolin, all of them later associated with the Dalton and Doolin gangs. Four out of five wild Daltons, and all the cowboys named above, went out of life violently and suddenly, shot to death by officers or citizens supporting the law. If they learned anything at all from the experience of others, they must have known that they would come with unexpected swiftness to the end of the crooked trails they were following, that for them there could be no future for which to plan.

It must be remembered that in the Indian Territory at this time there was no law except that which was enforced by the deputy United States marshals operating from Fort Smith, Arkansas, under the direction of federal officers in conjunction with Judge Isaac C. Parker's court. Never before or since has there been such a judicial set-up as this one. The marshals were hard, grim men, and many of them died in the performance of their duty. The judge was firm and harsh. Before him at one time or another stood 28,000 criminals dragged there to receive justice. During the twenty-five years of his incumbency 168 men were sentenced to the gallows, of whom eighty-eight were actually hanged. In such an environment as surrounded those in the Cherokee Strip, though there were many bad men, the good citizens far outnumbered them. The parents of thousands of youths watched them anxiously as they grew up, for they knew there came an hour when spirited lads stood at the forking of the trails, one branch leading to an upright and constructive life, the other to crooked paths that could have no safe ending. Each of the Daltons came in turn to that dividing road. Some took the plodding way of hard work and respectability, Grat, Bob, Emmett, and Bill Dalton followed the other trail.

There was an older brother, Frank, in whose blood the call to adventure also sang. But Frank lined up on the side of the law. He was one of the deputy United States marshals who went out from Fort Smith to run down the whiskey smugglers and the other criminals who infested the Indian Territory. In a desperate battle, during which several outlaws were killed, Frank Dalton came to his death. Grattan was chosen to fill his brother's place and shortly afterward Bob joined the force. Young Emmett also served as guard.

But Grattan and his younger brothers lacked the disciplined self-control of Frank. They went wild, first in California and later on their home terrain. Having left the government service, it was not long until they were outside the law. Bob and Emmett Dalton, with George Newcomb and Charley Bryant, robbed a Santa Fe train at Whorton in the Strip. They made a haul of $14,000 and a safe getaway. Newcomb, Pierce, Broadwell and Powers were with the Daltons when they held up an M. K. & T. train near Wagoner. The take this time was $19,000, not counting non-negotiable paper. Then came the Red Rock robbery.

One of the gang had already "handed in his checks," as the border phrase went. Charley Bryant had been captured by Ed Short, one of the old fighting marshals of the border. The outlaw was put on a train by the officer, who was careless enough to let his handcuffed prisoner get his fingers on a revolver. The two men stood in a baggage car and blazed away at each other. Both were killed.

IT WAS on a pleasant July evening in 1892 when the Dalton gang stopped the "Katy" train near Adair, Oklahoma. Some hint of the attack had reached the authorities and a posse was on board the train. There was a short, sharp battle, in which three of the guards were wounded badly. The outlaws robbed the express car and departed into the night. It was not the custom of the Daltons to take the possessions of the passengers.

There is vanity among train robbers. A bandit gets the hero complex. The Daltons decided to outdo the James-Younger gang by robbing two banks at the same time. They picked the Condon and the First National banks at Coffeeville, Kansas. There were five of the band present, Broadwell, Powers, and Grat, Bob, and Emmett Dalton. A Negro with supplies waited in the Cherokee Strip for the return of the robbers after their exploit. He waited, but they never came. At last word reached him that four of the lusty riders were dead, the fifth dying from twenty wounds, many of them made by buckshot.

The bank stick-ups went wrong from the first. Before a gun was fired the adventure was doomed. Somehow the word spread that the Daltons were robbing the Condon. Coffeeville was on the edge of a hunting country. The citizens found their guns, and when the Oklahoma men came out with their loot the battle began. Bob and Emmett reached the hitching rack where the horses had been left. They waited for their accomplices to come. At last Broadwell, Powers, and Grat Dalton appeared. From all directions bullets poured upon the robbers, and they returned the fire.

The town marshal, Charles T. Connelly, went down, dead. Bob and Grat Dalton were down. Powers, Broadwell, and Emmett had been wounded. All three of them reached their saddles, but Powers was killed before his second foot had touched the stirrup. Broadwell wheeled and spurred away. Just outside of town he dropped from the saddle, lifeless. Emmett rode back through the lane of fire to pick up his brother Bob. A shotgun in the hands of Carey Seaman, a barber, sent eighteen buckshot into the back of Emmett as he stooped for his brother.

Four citizens were dead, four bandits. Several others were wounded. Amazingly Emmett Dalton recovered. He went to the penitentiary, was paroled, and finished his life as a Los Angeles business man.

The rest of the band took no warning. Under Bill Doolin they reorganized. Tilghman captured Doolin. He escaped, to go on more forays.

As I have written, he came to a sudden violent end, as did Newcome, Pierce, and Bill Dalton.

The bad man never learns from the experience of others. The Dalton and the Doolin gangs were hardly out of the way before other desperate men were organizing to try their luck at the same hazardous game, this time in the rough country of Wyoming. They were called the Hole-in-the-Wall gang, this bunch of former cowboys who preyed not only on Wyoming but on a great stretch of country that included bits of Montana, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Colorado, New Mexico, and Oklahoma.

Leaders of this group were "Kid" Curry, whose real name was Harvey Logan, and "Butch" Cassidy, also known as George Parker. Two other Logan brothers, John and Loney, and a cousin named Bob Lee, were members of the outfit, as was also Harry Longabaugh, a big bowlegged fellow who was often dubbed "the Sun-Dance Kid." O. C. Hanks, Tom O'Day, Ben Kilpatrick, Will Carver, and Elza Lay rode with "The Wild Bunch" on their raids, though it was seldom that the whole party was together at any one time. "Flatnosed" George Curry (no relative of the Logans) was a prominent member of the party.

This part of the Northwest was always a wild district. Ten years before Butch Cassidy arrived on the scene some reckless members of the Montana Stock Association, in alliance with the Wyoming cattlemen, held a drive of rustlers which lasted for two or three months and resulted in the death of seventy of the thieves, according to the evidence of some of those engaged in it. This had been an effective lesson, but the rustlers were back at their old ways again. Cassidy was convicted and sent to the penitentiary at Laramie, Wyoming. He was well liked, and at that time had no reputation as a bad man. His friends induced Governor Richards to pardon him. Shortly after this the bank and train robberies began.

The headquarters of the gang was at Lost Canon, sixty miles from Thermopolis, though they shifted their habitat frequently. Sometimes they were at Robbers' Roost, sometimes in Brown's Park. Utah saw a good deal of them. Occasionally some of them drifted into Idaho.

They robbed a bank at Belle Fourche, South Dakota, and another at Montpelier, Idaho. In June, 1899, the Wild Bunch robbed the eastbound Union Pacific express at Wilcox, Idaho. The trail was picked up quickly, and they were pursued as far as Casper, Wyoming, by Sheriff Hazen of Converse County. The escaping men turned suddenly on the posse, and in the exchange of shots the sheriff was killed, the outlaws "holing up" in the mountains.

The "Black Jack" Ketcham gang was operating in New Mexico, and its membership was more or less interchangeable with that of the Hole-in-the-Wall group. With Elza Lay and Ben and George Kilpatrick, Butch Cassidy and the Ketchams held up a train at Folsom, New Mexico, in the course of which the conductor killed George Kilpatrick and wounded "Black Jack". The sheriff of Huerfano County, Colorado, was hot on the trail of the fleeing robbers. A bullet finished the life of Will Ketcham. Lay's arm was shot off, and he and "Black Jack" were captured, but not before they had mortally wounded the sheriff, Jeff Farr. "Black Jack" was tried and hanged. Lay was given twenty years in the penitentiary at Santa Fe.

IN AUGUST, 1900, Harvey Logan and Ben Kilpatrick held up a Union Pacific train at Tipton, Wyoming, after which they retired for a time to Fort Worth, Texas, where Cassiday and Longabaugh were taking a holiday. It was not too long a rest, for on September 19th of the same year they stopped and robbed the First National Bank at Winnemucca, Nevada. In making a getaway the fugitives divided forces. A posse caught up with one group as far away from the scene as Texas and Will Carver was killed. A year or two prior to this time and Kid Curry Carver had shot down a law officer named George Scarborough, who had put an end to

John Selman, who had assassinated John Wesley Hardin, who had a record by his own admission of having killed more than thirty men. The homicide chain could be carried back much further without a break.

Not long after this Harvey Logan (Kid Curry), Ben Kilpatrick, and O. C. Hanks "stuck up" a Great Northern train at Wagner, Montana. Pinkerton men took the trail. Ben Kilpatrick was arrested at St. Louis, November 5, 1901, and Kid Curry at Knoxville, Tenn., after a desperate resistance in the course of which he wounded two officers. Curry was given a sentence of 135 years in all, but he overpowered a guard and escaped without serving any of it.

The Wild Bunch was getting near the end of its trail. Charles Siringo, "Doc" Shores, and a dozen other officers and sheriffs were watching for them any time they made an appearance. Siringo claimed in his book that he followed these lawbreakers twenty-five thousand miles. A reward of $6,500 was offered by the Pinkertons after the Wagner hold-up. The circular explained that a man had boarded the blind baggage as the train was leaving Malta, Montana, and that he had crawled over the engine tender and covered the two of the crew who were in the cab, forcing them to stop the engine at the point he wished.

The territory of the different "bandit" belts throughout the western part of the United States was pretty well defined. One stretched across Texas to Arizona. Another zigzagged through the Rockies in Colorado to the district about the famous Robbers' Roost. A third crossed Wyoming in the sparsely settled country adjacent to the Hole-in-the-Wall district. Here for many years skulked a nomadic population of rustlers, stage robbers, and fugitives from justice. Among the foothills southeast of the Big Horn mountains, with the nearest railroad a hundred miles distant, where the gulches and mountain pockets offered natural hiding places, law officers had small chance to pick up the trail soon enough after the train robbers had struck.

The Union Pacific railroad organized a band of rangers to protect its line. Every train carried with it armed guards. Tim Keliher, chief of the Wyoming branch of the Union Pacific secret service, was put in charge of this. He picked as deputies Jeff Carr, a well-known law enforcer of Wyoming, Pat Lawson and Tom Meggeson, noted trailers, and Joe La Fors, the deputy United States marshal who brought to justice the notorious Tom Horn.

Headquarters were at Cheyenne. A baggage car was specially fitted up for the rangers and an engine put at their service. At one end of the car the horses were tied, at the other canteens, tin stoves, cots, and supplies of food were kept ready for the call. Inside of ten minutes the rangers' car could be on the way to the scene of any hold-up.

Wyoming did not look so good to Butch Cassidy and his friends after that. They shifted to Colorado for their next raid. At Parachute a train was held up, but little booty was secured. "Doc" Shores, a hawk-eyed old-timer, took up the chase. He trapped the robbers in a gulch near Rifle, Colorado. Kid Curry, badly wounded, was heard to call to his companions,

"Good-by, boys. Don't wait for me."

A moment later he sent a bullet from a .45 revolver into his brain.

One after another the Hole-in-the-Wall bad men were arrested or "rubbed out." George Kilpatrick had been shot to death near Folsom, New Mexico, and his brother Ben was serving a long sentence at the Columbus penitentiary. (It may be mentioned that after his release Ben returned to his evil ways and lost his life at Sanderson, Texas, March 13, 1912, while attempting to hold up a train.)

Two minor members of the gang, named Madden and Bass, were breaking rocks for their share in a Great Northern railroad robbery. At Laramie Bob Lee was behind bars and Elza Lay at Santa Fe. "Flatnosed" George Curry had come to the end of the trail at Thompson Springs, Utah, and O. C. Hanks at San Antonio, Texas, both shot while resisting arrest. While resting at his old home in Dobson, Missouri, Loney Logan had been trapped and destroyed trying to fight his way out. His brother John had "gone west" years before this. A turbulent fellow, John had an arm filled with slugs as he "hurrahed" a town and later the arm had to be amputated. The wound was hardly healed before he ordered a ranchman named Winters to leave his homestead. The nester declined, was threatened, and saved his life temporarily by shooting John before the latter did as much by him. Kid Curry took care of the Winters account later.

Only Butch Cassidy and Harry Longabaugh were left. Both of them could see the writing on the wall. No matter how they dodged and backtracked, there was no safety for them now in the West. They slipped down to New Orleans and took a boat for the Argentine. For years little was heard of them, though rumors came up of their troubles with the authorities there. At last Arthur Chapman verified a story that they had been killed. In 1909 they held up a mine payroll near Quechisla in southern Bolivia. With pursuit closing in on them, they flitted from place to place hurriedly. In the course of their flight they stole a mule to help them escape.

At San Vicente they stopped to rest at a drinking place. At last they had made a clean getaway, they thought. By sheer chance a stranger in the place recognized the mule. A Bolivian captain walked into the *tendejon* to make inquiries. One of the fugitives killed him. The troops, now under the command of a sergeant, besieged the place.

They had left their rifles in the room they had taken across the patio. After emptying their revolvers, it was clear that they had to get the rifles to save themselves. Longabaugh tried to cross the square and fell, desperately wounded. Cassidy dragged him back to cover. Two cartridges were left in the dead captain's revolver. The outlaws decided not to let the soldiers capture them. When the attackers broke they found both of the gringos dead.

ROUGHLY speaking, the old-time Western outlaws ran true to type. Most of them had been cowboys before they started to follow crooked trails. When they rode the range there was no outward difference between them and their fellow punchers, unless it was in the restlessness which always kept them moving and in the recklessness that made them dangerous. But within them was an impatience at the steady grind of work, an urgent impulse to take short cuts to easy money. So far they were all alike, but within the type individuals differed. In the terrible Plummer gang Steve Marshland was unique. He would rob, but he would not kill.

Other road agents have shared this characteristic. It is said that Butch Cassidy never killed a man until the last day of his life.

In this respect he differed from his co-leader Kid Curry, who left behind him the record of a trail of homicides. At Knoxville, Tennessee, he quarrelled with a saloonkeeper and killed him. In revenge for his brother John's death he cut down the nester Winters with a bullet sent from the brush as the homesteader was brushing his teeth. The most famous of his victims was Pike Landusky, trapper, freighter, cowboy, Indian fighter and saloonkeeper, from whom a town in northern Montana derives its name.

Landusky would have been out of place in any setting except that of the frontier West. He was a long, rangy man, broad-shouldered and strong, and never in his life did he side-step a fight. A born leader, he had a large following among those with whom he lived. Generous to a fault, he was ready at any time to share all he had with a friend. But he could be a bitter enemy, one so blunt and impulsive that trouble followed him all his life. His chief weakness was a temper so little under control that he was likely on small provocation to fly into furious rages.

For more than twenty years he was an outstanding figure in his part of Montana. For a time he was employed by the Diamond R freight outfit, but later went on his own as a trapper. Dan R. Conway tells a characteristic story of him. In partnership with John Wirt he had acquired a fine lot of furs, which they cached on the Musselshell while they went to town for supplies. In their absence a party of Sioux Indians found the furs and appropriated them for personal use. The trappers returned, to find themselves prisoners, but captives who declined to give up their arms. The braves gave them some buffalo meat, which Landusky cooked in a fry-pan for himself and partner. He was boiling with rage but realized the folly of giving way to it.

One of the warriors reached over Landusky's shoulder and snatched up the meat. Pike went berserk. He slammed the pan against the face of the brave, spattering him with hot grease, then drove the barrel of his rifle into the stomach of the Indian and doubled him up. Tearing off the man's breech-cloth, he whipped him over the head with it, an unforgivable offence to the Sioux.

Wirt cocked his gun and waited. His opinion was that both he and his partner would be dead inside of five minutes.

The Sioux chief rushed across to Wirt and ordered him to make Landusky stop at once.

"The hearts of my men are bad and they will kill you both," he warned.

Fortunately one of the braves called out that Landusky was crazy. There could be no other explanation of a rage so wild. The other Indians agreed, and the tribes never injured a madman. This was ingrained in them as a part of their religion. The war party caught up their horses and departed. They were on their way to the Crow country to steal riding stock. On their return they stopped to present Landusky and Wirt with sixteen horses, to pay for the stores they had destroyed.

There was enmity between Landusky and Kid Curry. How it started is not known, but there is a story that Pike was appointed a deputy sheriff to take Curry to Fort Benton for trial prior to his conviction for rustling and that Pike grew angry and abused his prisoner. Curry was a sullen fellow, and he nursed his desire for revenge.

He rode to Landusky and tied his horse at the rack in front of the place of "Jew Jake," who was himself a hard character. In a gunfight with the marshal at Great Falls Jake had lost a leg, and he now carried a rifle as a crutch.

Pike stood in front of the bar, an elbow leaning on it, when Kid Curry pushed through the swing door into the gambling house. Curry walked to his foe, lashed at his face with a doubled fist, and before Landusky could recover slammed down on his head with the barrel of his revolver. Already shaken and jarred, Pike tried to close with the outlaw. Curry fought him off, beating his opponent to the floor with more crashing blows. Still on the ground, Pike reached for a handkerchief to wipe the blood out of his eyes. The Kid pumped a bullet through his heart, claiming afterward that he thought Landusky was about to draw a pistol.

Kid Curry's eyes lifted from the lax body of the man he had just killed and let them sweep the room.

"Anybody want to take this up?" he demanded.

Jew Jake hobbled forward on his rifle-crutch.

"Everybody satisfied, I reckon," he said amiably.

That was stretching the truth. A good many were not pleased at what Harvey Logan, alias Kid Curry, had done, though they admitted that Pike Landusky's violent explosive temper had brought him close to death a dozen times. Pike had his faults and his virtues. Both were of an outstanding kind. Reckless and undisciplined though he had been, a host of friends regretted his murder.

MORE than a decade after the Hole-in-the-Wall gang had been exterminated, a road agent of an entirely new kind appeared in Wyoming. He played a lone hand and robbed the coaches from the inside while the train was still traveling across country. After he had mulcted the passengers of two trains of their cash a guard was sent to protect them. The robberies occurred west of Laramie on the Union Pacific. A reward of $6,500 was offered for his capture.

The bandit was a country boy brought up near Greeley, Colorado, named William L. Carlisle. Evidently he robbed for the sake of the excitement and the notoriety as much as for the money.

After the second hold-up he wrote a

letter to the Denver *Post* which shows his vanity and love of the limelight.

> I am sending you the watch chain (so it ran) that I took from a passenger on my last hold-up. I'll return the watch on my next. I'll hold up the Union Pacific west of Laramie just to convince the police that they have not got the right party. Please return the chain to its owner with my compliments.
>
> I remain, sincerely,
>
> The White Masked Bandit

On April 21, 1916, a passenger boarded the Denver-Salt Lake Limited at Laramie. He was a man of about 28 years of age, six feet two in height, and weighed 198 pounds. Nobody paid any attention to him. He was just another cowboy on the move, evidently a garrulous chap, for he talked with the guard, the brakeman, and the conductor. Half an hour after the train had left Laramie he prodded the guard in the back with a revolver.

"All right," he said. "Time for the hold-up. I'll take your gun first."

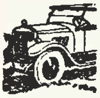
The startled guard could make no resistance. In fact, under the urge of the revolver, he walked down the aisle in front of the outlaw and held his hat for the passengers to make their contributions in it. Carlisle and his unwilling assistant passed into a second car and continued the levy on travelers' assets. Before the next station was reached the bandit made the conductor stop the train. He descended from it and vanished into the night, after handing to the guard the watch he had promised to return.

The country was full of posses searching for the daring bandit. A member of one of them came upon Carlisle hiding in a field. To the surprise of the officer the robber flung his revolvers to the ground.

"I'm not a killer," he called to his hunter. "If I have to shed blood to get away I would rather surrender."

Carlisle spent many years in the penitentiary. When he was released, not very long ago, he bought a cigar stand in a Wyoming town and sold magazines and tobacco to the public. Long since he had lost his craving for grandstanding.

During the 1920's there was a revival of bank "stick-ups," due to the discovery that the automobile made swift escape possible. When the James-Younger gang held up the gate receipts at the Kansas City fair before a thousand witnesses they had to depend upon fast horses to get away. But by the time the Hole-in-the-Wall gang was operating, the rural telephone made bank and train hold-ups highly hazardous. The automobile brought a new factor into the problem of putting an end to such raids. All over the West there was a temporary outbreak of bank robberies. It became possible to strike unexpectedly, deflect from the main thoroughfares, and dodge from one country road to another until the hide-out was reached.



ONE OF the most spectacular of these raids was the one upon the First National Bank at Lamar, Colorado. Just before noon, on May 23, 1928, a blue sedan drove up to the bank, and from it descended four men, not masked. They left the engine of the car running and walked into the building. The leader, a tall brown-faced man, snapped out an order to the staff and to the customers present.

"Stick 'em up!"

The president of the bank, A. N. Parrish, an old man of seventy-seven, was of frontier stock and had always said that if an attempt was made to rob his bank he would resist. He jumped for a revolver and fired at the nearest bandit, the bullet hitting the man in the jaw. A moment later Parrish went down, drilled through and through. Several slugs had struck him, and he was dead before his body slumped to the floor. His son snatched up another gun, to come to the aid of his father. He too was instantly killed.

The voice of one of the outlaws cut into the panic.

"Lie down on the floor, every last one of you," it ordered.

From the vault was taken more than two hundred thousand dollars in gold, notes, and securities. Within three minutes of the sound of the first shot the robbers moved back to the blue sedan, taking with them as a protection against attack Cashier Kesinger and Teller Lundgren.

The car raced into the country, and because it was crowded one of the bank officials was pushed out.

Sheriff Alderman of Lamar was already in pursuit in a fast car. He overhauled the robbers, who presently stopped their sedan. One of them got out and fired with a rifle from behind Kesinger.

As Alderman had only his six-guns with him he had to give up the chase for the moment.

A dozen posses took the field in automobiles. Planes flew above the road ribbons. Guards picketed the exits of towns. The bandits made a clean getaway. No positive clews of their line of travel could be picked up except the tragic ones of dead bodies. Kesinger was found in an old shack near Liberal, Kansas. He had been shot through the back.

At Dighton, Kansas, on the night of the robbery, two men came to the door of Dr. W. W. Wineinger and asked him to come into the country to attend a young man who had been hurt by a tractor. They proposed to take him in their car and bring him back, but Wineinger said he preferred to go in his own. One of the men rode beside him. The doctor suggested that since the weather was muggy the right hand window might be opened. His companion put a finger against the pane and pushed it out. That one fingerprint cost four men their lives and probably saved four others from the gallows.

The body of Dr. Wineinger was found a week later in a deep gully. His car had been pushed into it after him. The automobile had been gone over with a greased rag to wipe out fingerprints. The one mark on the window glass was the only one left.

An expert dusted, developed, and photographed it.

Meanwhile many arrests were made. Some showed perfect alibis. The evidence pointed to four suspects. Brought to Lamar, they were identified by the witnesses.

Feeling against them ran high, and there seemed to be little doubt of a conviction.

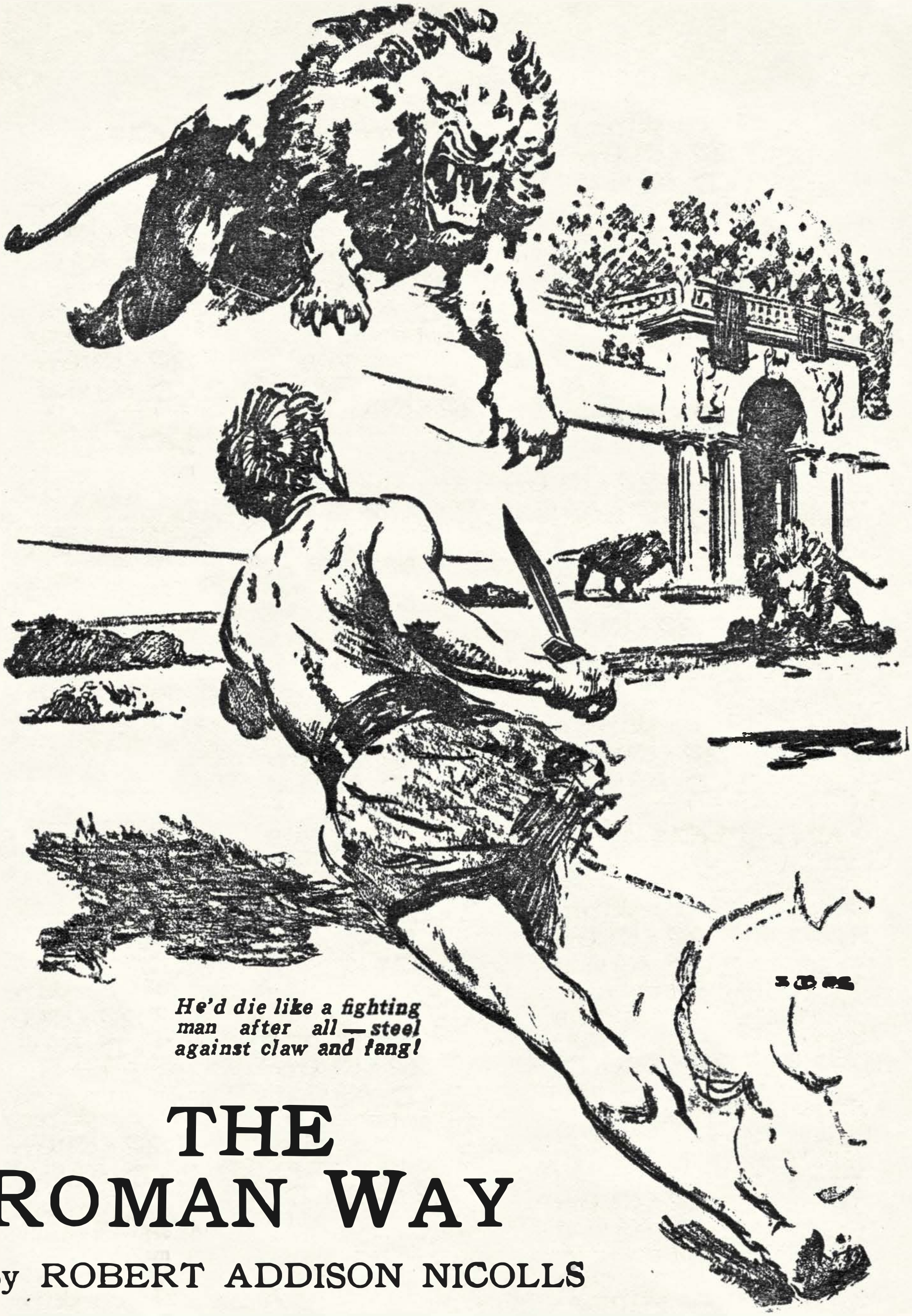
The fingerprint had been sent to Washington. Months passed, and one day the discovery was made that this print was identical with another made in 1916 at the Oklahoma penitentiary of Convict 6591. The convict was William Harrison Fleagle, commonly nicknamed Jake.

Chief of Police Hugh Harper went to Garden City, Kansas, to get his man.

Jake had been warned and had fled, but Harper picked up his brother, Ralph Emerson Fleagle.

It was found that the Fleagles had surprisingly large bank accounts. The two brothers and some companions lived intermittently on what they called a horse ranch, but they did little business in horses. Confronted with this and other evidence, after a long grilling Ralph Fleagle talked. One of the bandits, the same man whose jaw had been shattered by the old banker's bullet, was Howard L. Royston, and he was living in California. After Wineinger had given first aid and been murdered, Royston was hurried to an under-cover doctor at St. Paul, Minnesota. An apartment had been rented and George J. Abshier, the fourth robber, looked after him until he was well. Royston and Abshier were arrested and brought to Colorado. The case against the former suspects was dropped. Fleagle, Abshier, and Royston were convicted and hanged. Detectives followed Jake Fleagle and caught up with him on a train at Branson, Missouri, and when he reached for his pistol shot him to death.

There was nothing romantic about the Fleagles, Dillinger, or "Pretty Boy" Floyd. They were gangsters of the most cold-blooded types. Like the bandits of a generation ago, they had their little day and ceased to be. If there is one point that stands out like a bandaged thumb, it is that in the end the law will catch up with all of them. The aphorism that crime does not pay is trite but true.



He'd die like a fighting man after all—steel against claw and fang!

THE ROMAN WAY

By ROBERT ADDISON NICOLLS

EVERY man in the legions gets used to smells. It's part of his everyday life. There's the evening smells of the camp, for instance; sour sweat odor from a long march in the sun, the warm reek of cooking food, of garlic and cheese tinged with acrid wood smoke, and a whiff of the cavalry lines when the night wind veers round.

Fresh blood sopping the ground on a hard fought field has a salty tang that goes to the head like a draught of strong wine, and even the horses flare their nostrils out and squeal and jump. Next day it resembles the smell of stale flat lees in the bottom of a cheap tavern drinking cup, and the piled up bloated bodies spread a sickish sweet odor that makes a man retch in spite of himself. There's the smell of a burned and gutted town with its deep tinge of rotting, roasted flesh. A soldier's nose gets calloused in time.

But the Arena dungeons outstink 'em all. They're in a class by themselves.

Still, it's our bread and garlic now—Marcus' and mine. And a damn good job it is, this bossing the Arena gang. Easy in winter when the shows aren't on, but a ticklish piece of work when the big season starts. We run our gang on legion discipline; you've got to if you want to hang on in this business. Marcus is boss, just as though he were still centurion in the old Tenth, and me his *optio,* his second in command.

That's how it's always been. I guess that's how it'll always be; Marcus first, me second.

The old Tenth Legion was Caesar's favorite, and when I joined up as a raw young recruit in the first Gallic campaign I thought that I was great. All recruits are like that. Just put a bit of armor on a kid and weapons at his belt, and right away he gets to thinking he's a soldier. Besides, even a youngster in the Tenth felt he was better than a veteran in another unit. That bunch of women-chasing, sheep-stealing, wine-guzzling bluffers in the Sixth, for instance—

But Marcus took the freshness out of me in a hurry. He was an artist with the vinestock—the tough, willowy club of twisted grape roots that's a centurion's badge of office. My back was sore from my first hour in camp. His veteran's eye could spot the smallest fleck of rust on a cuirass, or a sword belt a hair's breadth out of place; and after drill he'd lay it on with every ounce of power in those great knotty shoulders until your whole world reeled around and the blood streamed down your back.

The older men would crowd about to see the fun, and jeer and laugh until they cried. You just gritted your teeth and hung on, praying to every god you knew that you wouldn't disgrace yourself. But you learned discipline. Hah! You learned it under the vinestock!

You hear a lot of oily slop these days about the greatness of the Roman arms, of modern methods, new military strategy and the like. Or listen to the gab of new-rich *equites* who've served like daredevils on some peaceful home front, stomping around in guilded mail that's never known a sword dent. Then it's all brave talk of weapons—the pila, the gladius—and this from a bunch of soft bellied slobs that couldn't even do a proper manual.

Father Zeus! It makes me want to spit!

I tell you Rome is great because of the vinestock, and centurions like Marcus who know how to use it! Hard but just. That's the combination for raw young lads fresh off the farm! That hardens them into Roman veterans! The Roman eagles fly on ahead, but under them the vinestock is the magic wand that points the way to victory.

It didn't take me long to get the hang of it. I liked the life, even with a perpetually raw back. And, vinestock or no vinestock, I liked Marcus.

So the first year passed. I was a veteran myself now, and had worn the coveted *corona civica,* the wreath of oak leaves for valor in battle.

What more could a man ask of the gods than to be part of the glory that is Rome?

THEN came the day of the ambuscade.

I'd reported that morning a split second late for roll call. Marcus just walked down the line until he was abreast of me, then bored those grey eagle's eyes of his into mine and snorted through his craggy nose.

"Call yourself a soldier, eh?" he snapped. I could feel my back muscles crawl already. "If we weren't in a rush I'd teach you now what an order means. Tonight's time enough, though!" He swung away.

"Form column!" he roared. "Hep! Stride it out!"

I could hear the rear files snickering as we slogged down through the main gate of the camp and across the ramp.

It was just a routine scout to some dumpy little Gaulish village or other.

Maybe the place even had a name. Who knows or cares? A muddy, rutty road track for a street, winding between a few miserable wattle and mud huts, and dirty refuse heaps.

We had scouts out, but the forest was tangled and thick all around and the Gauls jumped us front and rear before we had time to throw one pila. No room for formation. Just one smashing dog fight with every man for himself—short gladius against those long swinging swords of theirs and ten to one against us. We tried to form in the narrow road, Marcus roaring like a big dark devil in the van, and showers of darts biting at us from the cover of the tangled thickets over the heads of the tall Gaul swordsmen.

A blade licked out like a streak of fire over Marcus' helmet crest, and he went down with a roar choked half uttered in his throat, a swarm of Gauls surging over him even as I jumped forward to his side. Still, over the long years, it's not all clear in my mind.

In camp it's hour after hour of grinding weapon drill. Up shield, cut, stab, guard and recover, while the sweat pours into your eyes and your sword arm aches. Over and over until you curse Rome and the army and the day you ever signed. But preparation for just such times as this. It's automatic, perfect. And it carried me through to Marcus' side; it held off the steel of the Gauls until help arrived and we lugged him back.

Our second in command was out with a dart through the chest, every decurion dead or wounded. Things looked bad. And then it was that I heard my own voice yelling orders. So help me, the rest obeyed! We formed the old flying wedge, shield to shield, cutting our way out to a little hillock, and held 'em off until relief reached the place.

Marcus had a gash in the head you could lay a finger in, but he was a Roman, and a veteran centurion to boot. He came with the vinestock that night at evening roll call, voice cold steady, as though he hadn't lost enough blood to kill an ordinary man. And behind him stood Caesar himself and a group of his officers.

"Six paces front, Servius!" The old Marcus roar.

I took them, eyes front, back like a spear haft, but aching already.

"Strip!"

The ranks muttered just a little. He quelled the mutter with a glance.

"Late for morning roll call," he barked. "Unsoldierly! Ready?"

Hard but just. Vinestock discipline. By Zeus, the Roman way—the only way! I bit on my tongue as a precaution and the first blow whistled down. The blood began to trickle warm and sticky along my spine.

The last blow smacked, but I'd still kept my shoulders square. Then Marcus threw the blooded vinestock down and stood a pace in front with eyes like chill grey steel under his bushy brows. His huge gnarled hand was on my shoulder, voice the staccato Roman military bark.

"For distinguished bravery — quick thinking in emergency—rescue of your commanding officer—high private Servius, *principalis* first class, promoted to *optio*—second in command of Fourth cohort—Caesar's Own Tenth Legion!"

The men were cheering. Even Caesar smiled as the red flag *vexillium* standard lowered to receive its wreath.

Ho! The Roman way—Rome's greatness! What did it matter that a man's shirt was gummed already to his back by clotted blood?

From that time on it was Marcus and me; he first, me second. Centurion and *optio*. But all else was share and share alike.

THE first British campaign was a flop. Britain's a mystic, wind-swept land of mist and forest and tangled swamp, not worth Roman steel to the rank and file. But Caesar was Caesar, and at his word we'd have stormed the portals of Hades itself. So we went. But our force was small, the fleet got wrecked, and the Britons put up quite a scrap.

They're different from Gauls, but a funny race. Stain themselves blue with some dye or other—*woad* they call it—and fight mostly naked, except for a shield. Actually think it effeminate to wear armor. An impractical race that'll never amount to a plugged *obole,* but they can maneuver a two-horsed scythed chariot in a way that takes your breath. Pretty good fighting men at that, and every Roman who's matched steel with 'em'll admit it.

But the second time we went over we went equipped to stay. We beat their chariot force at the first landing and then went inland up a broad, forest lined river to a town of theirs. Lunden, they called it; a miserable little place with a wooden palisade around it, the capitol of some chief or other. Casswallon, I think his name was. A capitol! Hah!

But they scrapped for it like madmen!

The reserve went in, yet still they held, and Caesar rallied our lines himself. The Britons led us on. They'd felled trees along the forest's edge about the town, and it broke up all formation. They cut Caesar off with a handful of the Sixth. All the Sixth is good for is dice and boozing anyway. But Marcus saw in the nick of time and took the old Fourth cohort in.

Caesar was hard pressed, using his blade like all the rest until they got his horse, and when they did the damn nag fell on top of him. It was Marcus then who interposed his shield, matching blow for blow with a tall helmeted Briton in gray wolfskins, who tried his best to get his steel in Caesar.

Marcus beat the Briton down, and then their line gave way. It was victory after that—as usual, with our own lines roaring on ahead under the eagles through the green, tangled woods. The Briton whom Marcus had beaten down was only stunned; he moaned and stirred. I yanked him to his feet.

"Your prisoner, centurion," I said. Slaves brought a good price with the army dealers in those days, and a man could salt away a nice retirement stake if he kept an eye peeled for just such things as this.

Meanwhile they'd pried the dead horse off Caesar and got him on his feet. Not hurt a bit. Mars *must* have been his sire! He was as cool and calm and unruffled as though in his tent at camp, and stood for a minute looking us over as we clustered about. But you could tell just the same that his ears were weighing the battle sounds up ahead. He gave the prisoner a long, searching glance, and suddenly we saw him grin; that thin-lipped curving twist of the mouth that seemed always half a sneer.

"Aye," he said, "you've got something there, centurion!" And he knocked off the Briton's helm with a flip of his hand.

The long yellow hair cascaded down over the wolfskin cloak. Zeus! It was a woman!

I never went in much for barbarian women myself—too big and fleshy as a rule for my taste. But this one was different; young and slim and lithe, with wide gray eyes struggling between pride and fear.

Caesar was amused. You know what he was with a pretty wench. The Tenth used to have a bawdy song about it, telling all husbands to lock up their wives when Caesar came. We'd roar it out, slogging past him in review, and he'd sit his horse and grin like a satyr back at us. What a leader of men! May the gods curse the hands that struck him down.

Caesar looked at Marcus and licked his lips briefly with the tip of his tongue, while his eyes said "Give her to me!" Oh, he wanted her—bad. There was something about this slim-bodied warrior-girl that made a man swallow hard and the blood race hot in his veins. Mystery? Sure! But that wasn't all. She had the thing that few women possess, the strange, subtle power that aches a man's body through only a glance, and we'd seen no women since the day the fleet left Gaul!

Another leader would have ordered her taken off to his tent before you had chance to spit, and many's the time I've seen it done. Not Caesar! It was things like this that made him loved.

"Mine," said Marcus, as if in answer to that unspoken query in Caesar's glance, and there was a queer look in his own hard eyes.

Caesar shrugged. There were other women, and the battle line needed him up ahead. He reached under his corselet and brought out a golden plaque that hung about his neck—his good luck charm, two golden eagles worked in a curious scroll which rumor said had once belonged to the great Greek, Alexander. Without a quiver he threw the chain over Marcus' head.

"Luck for a life, centurion," he said, and abruptly mounting another horse, was off to reform the lines.

That night I slept alone—aye, and for many nights. For the whole time we stayed in Britain.

GLENDYWLYN, the girl's name was. She must have been a chieftain's daughter, though she never said. Marcus used her hard at first; nothing soft about Marcus. But though he never broke her spirit, she came in time to accept her lot with a sort of quiet dignity and reserve you could never seem to fathom. A hard man, Marcus, but a just man; and he was in love with her! Well, so was I. But she belonged to Marcus. I guess I drank more than my share of British mead the length of that campaign.

In all the years we've been together, before and since, I've never seen him look at a girl the way he'd look at her. There was a strange sort of gentleness to him after the first few weeks. Not that he wasn't a good hard soldier still, but he laid off the boozing and the dice, and he turned in his pay regularly to the regimental chest for safe keeping.

"Soldiering ain't all there is to life," he said one day out of a clear sky. We were in winter quarters then, and he'd got himself a neat little hut in the village outside camp for Glendywlyn, and a broken down slave wench he'd picked up cheap, to help her with the cooking. I'd go there with him sometimes after evening roll call and inspection, and we'd sit around, just talking, cozy as you'd like. I used to catch their glances then, when they didn't think I saw. I knew now why she'd never tried to get away.

"No," said Marcus, "a man can't soldier all his life. With a little money now, and the right kind of woman, a veteran could set himself up for the rest of his years on a neat bit of farm land. Italy's the place! The Campaignia for choice."

"You'd leave the Tenth?" I gasped.

He gave Glendywlyn a long slow glance.

"Aye, maybe," he said shortly, and relapsed into silence, watching her fingers fly away with needle and thread at a bit of cloth.

I got away early somehow. And I got a he-man's drunk on that night. An *optio* don't get the vinestock, but I did special guard mount with full equipment for a week.

The girl was big with child when the news came in from Gaul. A new revolt. Zeus, but those Gauls were a stubborn lot! Let Caesar turn his back and up they flared again. Yet we were ready in two days' time. Caesar's way—like a lightning stroke in a storm!

Marcus summoned me an hour before we sailed.

"New orders just came in," he said. His lined, grim face never changed expression, but there was a look in his eyes that made your flesh creep.

I waited.

"No room for non-combatants," he said. "We leave everything behind."

He was a good soldier, but his face was bleak.

I nodded at Glendywlyn. "Can't you send for her later?"

"In all the mess we're headed for? When? Where?" He shook his head, then turned to the girl.

"You understand?" he asked.

"I understand," she said.

"What will you do?"

"Go back to my people."

"And the child?" asked Marcus.

But she only gave him a queer, half smiling look that a man couldn't hope to read. Just then the trumpets sounded.

He fumbled in his equipment roll and brought out a bag of coin.

"Here," he said, "take this. It may help you to forget."

The fool, the fool!

The girl's eyes flashed, and I thought for a space that she would cry; but she bit her lip and fought for control. The money bag scattered its contents on the ground under the sweep of her hand.

"Romans!" she said. Her whole face sneered.

It was the only time I ever saw Marcus lose his iron self control. Grief wrenched his face, and shame, while his breath came hard.

And then the gods must have given him the happy thought! He pulled the golden plaque that had been Caesar's off his neck, looking her in the eye all the while, and slowly his fingers broke the thing in twain.

He held one of the golden eagles out to her.

"I won this when I won you, Glendywlyn," he said. "Will you take it and remember?"

Gravely she took it from his hands.

"I accept," she said, "I and the child."

"Glendywlyn—" He was breathing like a spent man, "Glendywlyn—"

But she wouldn't touch him. She looked like she was afraid to touch him. She just smiled briefly, once, into his eyes—then, turning quickly, she was gone.

We never saw her again.

War in Gaul, the coup in Rome. Then Caesar's death, and after that the hard campaign against old wine-guzzling Anthony and his Egyptian light o' love.

WHEN we finally mustered out we got the Arena job on the strength of merit and political pull, and so we've lived ever since. Not a bad life, except for the smell, human and animal, that makes the whole place reek as nothing else on earth. We've a small house nearby, with an old hag to tend the cooking, and bossing the Arena gang gives us plenty to do. We run 'em, as I've said before, on legion discipline—you've got to, and hand pick the guards for good tough qualities.

In the off season we drop down sometimes to the Campus Marius and watch the young men exercise at the war games. Rome'll never need to worry; they're a good crop! But it makes Marcus wistful when he sees.

"If I'd a son," he'll say, "a Roman, to take his father's place in the old Tenth. A son," he'll say, and swing his grizzled lion's head toward the west—And I'll know his thoughts are ranging a thousand leagues over forest and tossing sea to Britain, back over the long years to the yellow-tressed girl and the child he'll never see.

But when the season's in full swing there's no time for that. You work under tension all the while.

Lions from Africa—the good old short-maned Numidian is an Arena standby. Wolves and wild dogs and leopards. Elephants, the meanest tuskers you can get. Tigers from India. We even had a rhinoceros this time too—a horned nosed brute that killed five good men before we got him transferred safe and sound in a special cage down in the animal pits.

Good gladiors come high, but it's no trouble at all, even now, to pick up all the war prisoners that you need. We start piling them in as soon as the season starts, and the last few weeks before the show the dungeons are packed. Then you just sit on top of trouble day after day, waiting for the blow-off.

Marcus came into the guard room the night before the games began and ripped his tunic open at the throat as he sat down.

"Zeus, but it's hot tonight," he growled.

"Take it easy," I said, and pushed a full wine cup over the table top at him. "The show's on tomorrow. We're running on schedule. What more do you want?"

He grabbed a fistful of reports and shook the parchments under my nose.

"Change, change, and change again," he snarled. "In the name of Mars, why can't these asses be content to put up the money and let the experts run the show? That's what we're paid for!"

It made me grin. You know how it is. Each game's the same old story. Some big politician in need of votes scrapes his money bags bare to put on a spectacle for the mob. It's got to be bigger and better than anything before. He's nervous; you can't blame him. If the games are a flop the mob'll curse him to his face, and their votes go elsewhere. So the experts are called in and the fun begins.

Just as fast as you think you've made out a good schedule, the giver wants it changed. He gets panicky. Try and change a thing yourself without permission and it's worth your job. Between all that worry, and trying to keep the animals and prisoners under control, you've got your hands full.

You hear a lot of talk nowadays about

starved prisoners and graft from the food contracts. Maybe that goes for the provinces, but not in Rome. You can't fool the people who watch the games in the capitol; they're experts, and if you tried you'd be in for trouble. Our prisoners get good food, and good treatment too, when they aren't too crazy or stubborn to obey simple rules. It's our job to get 'em into the Arena fat and strong, and not crippled up or lacking fight.

Marcus hurled his emptied cup into a corner and shoved some reports at me to check; but suddenly we both were on the alert!

YOU get used to the Arena sounds just as you get used to the smell—a sort of low undertone of men's voices that rises muffled and restless under the mixed chorus of animal roars and snarls deep down in the dungeons below. The animals were loud tonight. We'd been starving 'em the last two weeks to get 'em in a temper. They ain't so dumb! I've always noted they seem to have some secret way of knowing when the long fast will end.

This time, though, it was something more. We were both half on our feet when the guard pounded in through the door.

There was blood on his torn tunic; blood poured from a section of scalp hanging soggily over one eye. We knew what had happened before he spoke, for the yelling came in plain through the open door; but Marcus waited for the report, measuring the man with a red, craggy browed stare that made him afraid to show panic. His salute was sloppy, but he'd regained full control.

"Prisoners loose, sir," he said. "Lower tier—cell fifteen!"

"You incompetent dogs!" Marcus was roaring. "The night before the games and you let a riot start. The whole damn crowd of you couldn't handle a one-legged hag with the itch!"

It wasn't so. They were good tough men!

"How many hurt?"

"Three guards dead, five hurt bad," the fellow said. "We're holdin' the passage. They ain't rushed us yet—too busy tryin' to open the other cells."

"Up to the main guardroom and give the alarm! Turn out every man!" roared Marcus. "Bring all the hot irons you can carry. Get goin'. On the run!"

Out in the corridor you could hear the yelling plain, deep down in the lower tier.

"Cell fifteen," said Marcus. "That'll be the batch of British war prisoners just in today. Mar's curse on 'em!" he snarled. "Why've they got to give us trouble on the very last night?" But he grinned like a wolf at me.

Generally you get a half score riots like this in spite of all the care you take. Just start penning up hundreds of half crazed, desperate men who know death's waiting presently out in the Arena, and you've got your work cut out. Have to watch 'em every minute! They try to open their wrists on the rough edges of their manacles, or take turns choking each other to death—anything to escape that Arena. When the guards go in to stop it, they're certain to get jumped unless there's plenty of red hot irons along, and then you fight a miniature war deep down under the earth in a

"I Talked with God"

(Yes, I Did—Actually and Literally)

and, as a result of that little talk with God some ten years ago, a strange new Power came into my life. After 48 years of horrible, sickening, dismal failure, this strange Power brought to me a sense of overwhelming victory, and I have been overcoming every undesirable condition of my life ever since. What a change it was. Now—I have credit at more than one bank, I own a beautiful home, drive a lovely car, own a newspaper and a large office building, and my wife and family are amply provided for after I leave for shores unknown. In addition to these material benefits, I have a sweet peace in my life. I am happy as happy can be. No circumstance ever upsets me, for I have learned how to draw upon the invisible God-Law, under any and all circumstances.

You, too, may find and use the same staggering Power of the God-Law that I use. It can bring to you, too, whatever things are right and proper for you to have. Do you believe this? It won't cost much to find out—just a penny post-card or a letter, addressed to Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 182, Moscow, Idaho, will bring you the story of the most fascinating success of the century. And the same Power I use is here for your use, too. I'll be glad to tell you about it. All information about this experience will be sent you free, of course. The address again—Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 182, Moscow, Idaho. Advt. Copyright 1939 Frank B. Robinson.

screaming, bloody shambles. Kill or maim too many and the blame comes back on the Arena boss. It's hard on the guards!

Up to now, though, we'd had no riots at all, and the waiting had been bad. That's why we grinned. It was a relief to meet trouble long overdue and get it over with. So we went poking right ahead into the dim torchlit lower tiers with the whole reserve guard at our heels, the hot irons growing white, and slaves with the portable braziers heating more as we went along.

The corridor near cell fifteen was packed with a milling mob of half naked, long haired men—Briton's, all right! I hadn't seen any in twenty years, but a man don't forget men he's crossed steel with. They were working at the locks on the other cells when we came in sight, and the screaming was so bad it near deafened you.

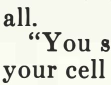
The array of glowing iron made 'em pause a bit, and the men in the other cells got fearful and stopped their noise, having had a taste of the irons before. But the Britons had the clubs of the guards they'd killed, and being men fresh in from the outside world were full of fight.

Marcus walked right out in front of us all.

"You scum," he roared, "get back to your cell or I'll burn the flesh clean off your lousy frames!"

He was speaking the Celtic tongue, and having a hard time after the long lapse of years. I could have done better myself, but bad as it was they understood.

They milled a bit, not afraid, exactly —no Briton's afraid when he gets his mad up. Even a Roman'll give 'em that! But while they were still making up their minds whether to charge or take orders, a man stepped forward from their ranks. He was a giant of a man, and the shadowy light made him bulk even larger. He marched right up to Marcus.



THE guards in the front rank thrust out their long glowing irons to protect the old veteran from a sudden charge, but the Briton had no weapon. He just came close and stared at us with a keen, proud glance, then locked his eyes with Marcus. Then in a slow contemptuous way he stuck out a big, bare, muscled arm and laid it on top of a red hot iron. Never said a word; never changed expression. Just stood there matching glance for glance, while the silence was as strong as the yelling a moment before, and his cooking flesh sizzled like bacon on a spit. The stench drowned out the regular prison stink.

It was Marcus made the first move. He struck the Briton's arm away from the iron.

"Zeus!" he growled, "you should have been a Roman!"

The other's mouth twitched in a grim little smile, and as it did I suddenly saw that he was just a kid, fresh and fair-faced as the warrior class of Britons' are; the down just on his cheeks, that were pink in the torchlight under the coat of prison dirt. Maybe I had looked so once when I first joined the legion. Maybe Marcus too—long ago.

"There are other brave men besides Romans," he said, and waited. There was a grim eagle's look in that eye of his that matched even Marcus at his best.

The old centurion gestured with his club at the mob from cell fifteen.

"You their leader?"

"Such as they have," said the boy.

Marcus was grim. "I ought to burn the hides off the lot of you," he growled, then grinned in spite of himself.

"Are they all like you?"

"Sure," said the youngster, and grinned right back. But his mouth was white with pain.

"Will they take your orders?"

"Aye."

"Then tell 'em," said Marcus, "to get back to their cell! You haven't a chance to fight your way out. You're here to die! Why not hale and whole and able to put up a scrap? Or do we drag you all out on the sands tomorrow too crippled to even walk?"

The kid frowned, but before he could answer, Marcus spoke again.

"A brave man," he said. He nodded toward the seared arm. "That's why I've wasted this much talk! If they'll go back to the cell I'll send down wine enough for one good last drunk."

"On the level?" asked the kid.

"On the level," said Marcus.

The Britons took it like men! They grinned a lot and whooped at the guards. You've got to admire Britons. They trooped right back to the cell like lambs, but when the boy turned to follow, Marcus touched his shoulder.

"What's your name?"

"Cedric."

"Come up to the guard room and get some oil on that arm."

Zeus! This from hard-bitten, grim, old Marcus! I couldn't believe my ears!

The kid shook his head. His face was set.

"I stick with my men," he muttered. Yet you could see he was all in.

"You're a prisoner," said Marcus. "You'll obey orders!"

The boy still looked stubborn. Marcus tapped him on the back.

"I'll see you rejoin your men in time," he growled. That settled it.

The kid talked briefly through the grated doors, where slaves were already welding the new locks on, and the Britons yelled for him to enjoy himself, and demanded the promised wine on the run.

So we went up again to the guardroom through the long corridors that were silent now, save for the groaning here and there, and the animal noises that had strung up again, savage and restless, with a low, deep, hungry undertone of lion roars, and the battering smash of the rhinoceros trying to work out of his cage. We'd been touching him up now and then with hot irons to put him in a meaner humor.

Cedric was a handsome lad. I've no sympathy with barbarians, fools standing in the way of Roman might and law. Don't want to be civilized. But there was something about this fellow that drew you in spite of yourself.

He sprawled out on a bench before the guardroom table, resting his back against the stone wall, and looked the two of us over with a kind of slow, dignified interest, just as though *he* were a Roman, and we a couple of prisoners. Oh he had guts and dignity! Coming from a barbarian, though, it got a bit under the skin.

Marcus yelled for wine, and when it came the boy drank deep. He'd begun to pale out a little around the gills, but the drink brought the color back under the down on his cheeks, and when a slave got some oil on that burned arm and a clean bandage over it, the Briton perked up.

Marcus stared at him a long time. What thoughts lay masked behind those hard, scarred features only Zeus knew. Yet I could guess, because I think they were like my own.

This kid was a fighting man, descended from fighting stock.

I'VE seen men die screaming by the thousands in war, under the torture, in the Arena; and I know that a really brave man's a rare animal. Doesn't take much guts to die with a sword in your hand and the heat of battle driving you on. But when a man's known the dim walls of the dungeons closing about him, when he's listened to the roaring of the hungry beasts; when he knows he's trapped and the only way out's to the Arena sands and death, it seems to melt the marrow in their bones. They're apt to scream or yell or moan with crazy fear. The waiting, the uncertainty sort of breaks 'em down. They whimper and beg. Phaugh! It turns your stomach.

But this fellow! To let the filthy beasts tear at one like this!

Finally Marcus spoke.

"We served in Britain." He jerked a thumb at me. "Together," he said, "under Caesar."

"Aye?" said the kid. His lip curled. "Britain was a fair land before you Romans came."

"The march of civilization," said Marcus. "We bring the fruits of Roman progress to you. The Roman mission, the Roman way—the only way!" The pride of it was in his voice.

"The Roman way!" The kid's voice cracked. "Death and destruction! That's the progress of Rome! Gutted towns that once held peaceful homes. Dead men piled rotting in the weed-grown fields, with the ravens glutting themselves fat on human flesh. The wails of helpless women and children carried off by filthy dealers in slaves." He spat. "That for your Roman way!"

Marcus' face grew harder.

"Because you backward peoples resist," he snapped. "*Vae Victis*— woe to the conquered! Submission or steel, that's Rome's way!" He banged his fist down on the table boards until the wine cups jumped.

But it was as if the kid hadn't heard him.

He'd thrown back his head, and the light in his eyes held a far away look that transfigured his face. I'd seen that same expression on the faces of Druids when we burned them in their own wicker cages in Gaul. The look of a dreamer, a prophet—impractical, a wild soft spot inside. All Britons have the streak. That's why they'll never amount to much. They lack the good hard common sense that's made Rome what she is—mistress of the world until the end of time!

"Britain," Cedric whispered, "Britain—" His thrown-back face glowed with that inner light. "High cliffs and the roaring sea. Green fields and fallow under the misty sun, and ravens cawing in the woods. A land of happiness and warriors and brave deeds. A land of freedom and a land worth dying for!"

With eyes half closed he began to chant as though in prophecy, while the veins in his forehead pulsed with a rush of blood.

"War and steel and fire over a harried land; the tramp of Roman feet, and after them more war, and more, and the shoutings of strange war-cries. Yet in the end, greatness and happiness and peace; and the name of Britain on every tongue, and the name of Rome but a memory."

For minutes he sat there looking off into space. You could sense that the shell of the man remained, but his spirit was away to some far place beyond the stone walls of the room. I've heard the Druids chant so when death approached. It shakes a man a little—a thing that steel and good cold reason can't quite combat. Glendywlyn had had it too. But pshaw, what a foolish waste of words. Rome but a memory! Hah!

Slowly the youngster opened his eyes and looked about.

Unconsciously Marcus' hand was playing with the half of the golden plaque on its chain about his throat. He often touched it thus, and when he did I knew that his thoughts were belying the hard weathered mask of a face. The boy, his talk of Britain, had swerved my centurion's mind back over the long years, back to another time and place, and the memories that haunted them. He frowned, twisting the chain as he ruminated, and the plaque lay soft and yellow under his fingers in the open V of the tunic against the hairy chest. The Britain's eyes glittered as he watched. Pshaw! All barbarians covet gold, and he was no exception!

"I knew Britain," Marcus said, and the harsh, grating bark in his voice had stilled. He looked at the boy. "A brave man," he said grudgingly. "Almost like a Roman." His shrewd glance bored into Cedric's eyes.

"Would you live?" he asked suddenly.

My heart leaped a bit. He'd the power to pull strings even at this late hour. The streets outside were already astir in the early dawn. People had begun to jam in ahead for good places, though the games wouldn't start for hours.

The Briton's face flushed; he drew a long breath.

"Free man or slave?"

"Free," said Marcus, "if you stay in Rome! I'll hold you back, buy you," he said, "then manumit you." His hard mouth twisted under some inner pressure; he hesitated. "Kid, you're a good tough one. We could use you here on the Arena gang."

This to a barbarian! This from hard boiled old Marcus! By all the gods he wanted this lad!

"My men?" asked Cedric quickly. There was a catch in his throat.

Marcus snorted like a bull.

"Must I buy all Britain?" he snarled. "They're part of the show, nothing to me!"

"They're Britons," said the kid quietly, but his voice snapped hard, like a taut bow string.

Marcus shrugged. "Barbarian scum!"

Cedric's mouth formed in a hard, thin line. He gave Marcus glance for glance. "They're my men and my countrymen. I go where they go!"

Marcus nodded his craggy old head in grim approval, just as though he must have known all along it would be like this. He lowered his eyelids, drumming the table top hard with his fingertips, and whistling low and tonelessly between his teeth.

"All right," he said finally, "you'd better get back to your cell." He yelled for the guard.

"But first," he said, "we'll have one last drink." He eyed the kid over from head to toe. "You look like a rag-picker! Clean him up," he ordered the slave who was pouring the wine. "Over there in the corner will do. Rip those filthy rags off him and get him a fresh tunic."

Cedric submitted quietly.

By the gods he was good to look at when he'd been scrubbed down and dressed. He'd a pair of shoulders on him, wide and sloping and coiled with rippling muscle. The shoulders of a swordsman. What a waste—what a waste of strong young flesh!

MARCUS stood up and handed him a full wine cup. The kid looked at us both for the space of a hundred heart beats, not saying a word, while the chill gray light from outside struck in through the barred windows.

My centurion raised his cup.

"A toast," he said. He grinned his hard sardonic grin. "To Rome!"

"To fair Britain of the wind-swept cliffs," said the kid, "and damnation to all that's Rome!" He quaffed the wine and dashed the lees full into Marcus' face.

The latter never moved; his rocky features never changed.

"You should have been a Roman," he said simply, but the boy only laughed and followed the guard out through the door.

We both sat down again, but we didn't speak. There was work to do—reports and last minute checks to make, yet still we didn't move. Somehow my senses felt drugged and numb.

The slave moved about picking up the bloody rags that had been Cedric's clothes. When he did something fell out of the folds and hit the floor with a metallic rattle. He stooped like lightning to retrieve it, but Marcus shot out a foot and sent the fellow spinning.

"Hold on," Marcus said. "Pay's poor enough around here for the likes of you to cut in on the extras."

The object had fallen close to my feet. It was gold, all right, some carved thing or other, yet when I bent to pick it up I felt a cold chill down my spine. I'd rather have faced a flying wedge of Gallic swordsmen with bare hands than to have lifted it above the table's edge.

Marcus' voice was amused.

"Heave it up," he said. "After all these years of sharing our luck, will you start holding out on me now?"

He was grinning still, but when the thing dropped on the boards in front of him, his mouth clamped tight.

The color drained from his face until the skin was grey, and the scars on his cheeks stood out like fresh, livid cuts. He was already fumbling at his breast. It seemed to take him a long, long time to bring out the half of the golden plaque. He gave the chain an impatient tug, and it snapped in a shower of glittering links. His fingers shook as he placed the plaque down beside the object that had lain in the dirty folds of Cedric's garment.

My centurion's hands moved the pieces slowly. You could see he was hoping they wouldn't somehow fit, those two broken double eagles. He brought their edges toward each other with infinite care, and he seemed to be half in a trance. There was no need for me to lean forward to see. The edges melted into each other. The golden eagles were together again!

For a long time he brooded over them.

THE Arena was alive with sound. Far above us the roar of the mob packing into their seats seeped faintly down, like the roar of surf on a rocky shore. Maybe the shore of Britain. Weapons clanged in the corridors, and the animals moaned hungrily. That devil of a rhinoceros still beat at his cage with dull, battering blows. I had looked forward to seeing him in action out on the packed sunlit sands, yet I knew I had no stomach now to see him so today.

Finally Marcus pushed the golden plaque away from him in an almost gentle gesture, but when his glance locked mine it was steady, with thin lips curved in a hard, proud smile.

"So," he said softly, "a Roman after all!"

"You could hold him back, appeal to Caesar!"

He only shrugged.

Then I remembered.

"He would stand with his men," I muttered.

"Aye," said Marcus, and his voice was full of a harsh, grim pride.

He cleared his throat and picked up some reports, yet I knew he was only pretending to read. When he finally spoke he didn't look up, but his steady voice had the ring of command as in the old days on campaign.

"Optio!"

He had never used my military title since the day we left the legion, nor had I. But now I answered him in kind.

"Centurion?"

"This matter of the British prisoners. They were marked down, I see, to go bare-handed against lions."

"Aye."

"An oversight!" His voice rang. "The schedule is changed! They go out with shields and swords! Break out those Thracian blades from the reserve storeroom! They're a good heavy weapon. See to it! On the run!"

So his son was to die like a fighting man after all—steel against fang and claw—and not like a gutted sheep.

I knew that there'd be trouble for this. Maybe our jobs would go. And we were old.

Still, I could have hugged his broad, gnarled shoulders; but I went to the door instead.

"Centurion?"

His steely eyes glared up at me. "Well?" he snapped.

"Shall I stay on and watch?"

"Aye, stay on. I shall want a report on the death of the British prisoners." He grinned crookedly.

"Vae Victis," he said. "The Roman way!"

I went on down the corridor and out.

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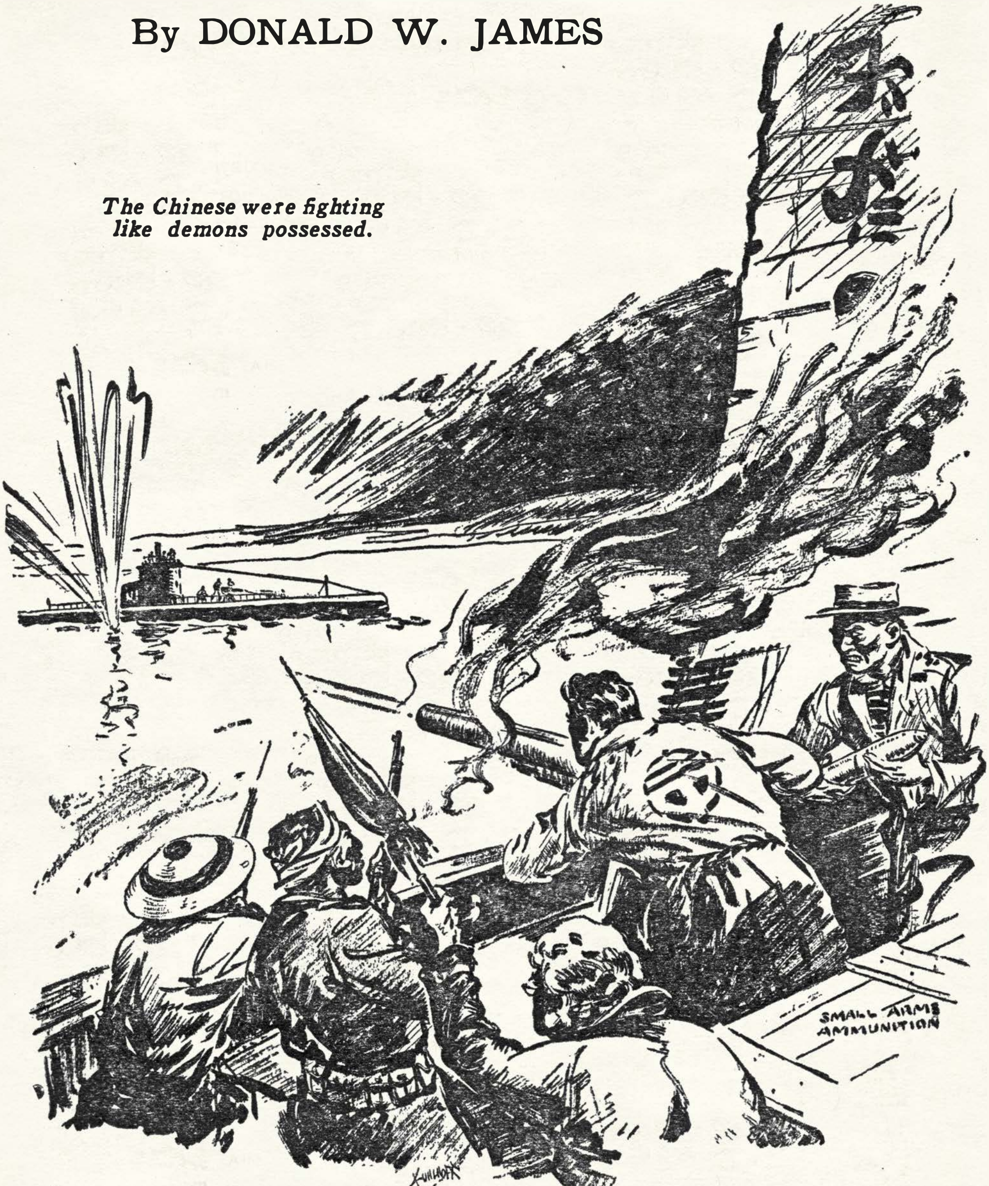


The Chinese were fighting like demons possessed.

THE headless body in the rickshaw was trailed slowly along the rubbish-strewn street. The wizened Chinese coolie between the shafts moved at a funereal pace. He was eyed watchfully by three Japanese sentries who, with fixed bayonets and fixed grins, were keeping order in the demolished suburb of Shanghai.

"This man smuggled arms to the Chinese," announced posters in Chinese and English pasted on each side of the rickshaw. The grim warning of execution was not lost upon the unemotional faces of the Chinese who clip-clopped in their wooden sandals over the shell-disrupted pavements.

The headless corpse was trailed past

a newly opened restaurant amidst the ruins. Several Europeans sat at tables on the pavement. Many were Jewish refugees. There were a few White Russians, old residents. They sipped glasses of tea, played endless games of dominoes, discussed furtively the chances of gambling in silver.

Lieutenant-Commander Hayter, formerly of His Majesty's Sloop *Odysseus,* sat morosely apart, sipping a vile whisky and soda. He saw the corpse, but ignored it. He was much more concerned with the decapitation of his own career. A brief official letter in his pocket signed by the Admiral of the China Squadron announced that, pending an inquiry into the action of the Sloop *Odysseus* opening fire upon a Japanese naval contingent engaged in operations on the Yangtze, Lieutenant-Commander Hayter was temporarily suspended from duty.

"And I would do it again under the same circumstances," he convinced himself, a vision of the Japanese armored launch opening fire upon a Chinese river boat crammed with helpless men, women and children. The slaughter would have been horrible, if Hayter had not given orders for the 4.7 to drop a shell in the vicinity of the Japanese assassins. It had scared the motor launch away.

A loud cackle of laughter caused him to lift his head. A moon-faced man with a complexion the color of dirty parchment was chuckling, jelly-like, in front of the headless corpse in the rickshaw.

"A Chinese fool who deserved to die!" spluttered the laughing man.

Four tall men, of the same pallor and grouped protectively about him, also grinned. The coolie pulling the rickshaw drooped his shaven head in humiliation. Being of the desperate underworld of Shanghai, he recognized the portly personage. Serge Savonoff, the White Russian, never walked the streets except with his bodyguard of four armed countrymen.

Savonoff lit a Russian cigarette, blew smoke into the emptiness where the face of the executed man should have been; still laughing, he entered the restaurant. With their hands sliding cautiously to the tunics which concealed their automatic pistols, the bodyguard sauntered after him. The swing-door wafted the tang of Russian cigarettes.

"So this is where you sit and mope," intoned a loud, American voice. "Brother, you're drifting into the devil's idleness!"

An extraordinary apparition confronted Hayter. An elderly woman with gray hair smoothed fiercely into a casque above her determined face. Aggressive horn-rimmed spectacles through which bright, alert eyes gleamed at him. A firm, wide mouth and battling chin. To add to her fearsome appearance, the woman wore a gray woolen jersey, riding-breeches of an execrable cut, and carried a black umbrella with an air which made it more deadly than a two-handed sword.

"Hello, Agatha," smiled the young man wryly. "How goes the mission work?"

"Terrible bad. God may be in His heaven, but all is not right with the world. I guess the world is going to hell out of sheer cussedness. Order me a drink, young man."

"What is it to be?"

"A gin and lime, of course. And may God forgive me. Have you seen that scoundrel of a White Russian, Serge Savonoff, bouncing along this way?"

"He's just gone inside, Agatha."

She grabbed her umbrella as though she had decided upon instant battle.

"I've come to get that gangster. Follow me, young man. I've got a job for you. And tell that dumb Celestial without a soul that I'll have my gin inside."

Like a battle horse smelling blood she charged through the swing-door.

THE moon-faced Savonoff with his four satellites was sitting in the darkest corner. A highly decorated sing-song girl sat with the White Russian. A podgy hand was stroking her slim arm.

The elderly woman almost threw a chair towards the table. She planked her umbrella amidst the glasses of tea.

"Send that child of sin away, Savonoff. I want to talk business with you."

The White Russian's mouth tightened with anger. The bodyguard rose in menacing fashion. Hayter lounged forward.

A moment's suspense, and then, with a whisper of Chinese and a wafting of cigarette smoke, the sing-song girl flitted away.

The bodyguard resumed their seats. Hayter also took a chair.

"And what would a missionary, Miss Agatha Manton, want with me?" drawled the White Russian. "I have grown too old and seen too much to want to join a prayer meeting."

"I guess you'd be a bad proposition, even as a repentant sinner," scowled the determined Agatha. "But I'm here to talk business. You've just transferred a cargo of guns and ammunition from the *Lady Lou,* haven't you?"

Savonoff narrowed his eyes, revealing something of the Mongolian.

"I don't mind admitting, Miss Manton," he drawled, "that I've taken over a cargo of Bibles, pianos, umbrellas and glassware. They are to be shipped up the Yangtze when the time is convenient."

"I'm a downright sort of person," said Agatha. "I know that the Bibles—God pity you—are revolvers, the pianos guns, the umbrellas rifles and the glassware cartridges."

"Really, Miss Manton, one would think you had some secret intelligence."

"When sinners come to us they shout their sins aloud, God bless them," declared Agatha, thwacking the table with her umbrella so that the glasses danced. "But I know something more important. You've got ten thousand tins of condensed milk in that shipment and it really *is* milk."

Savonoff had recovered his good humor. He chuckled.

"I admit the tinned milk was good camouflage. When we've delivered to the brave Chinese guerrillas the—er, pianos, we can throw the milk into the ocean."

"No you won't," said Agatha, thrusting her jaw forward. "I want those ten thousand tins for the starving children of the district."

"Really, and what price are you prepared to pay?"

"Not a cent."

"I'm afraid, as a business man, my soul is not touched by the needs of the starving poor."

"Not if I report to the Japanese the true character of that shipment?"

Once again the eyes narrowed. But he kept his temper.

"Not even if you report to the Japanese, Miss Manton. In any case, just to add to your information, the cargo is no longer aboard the *Lady Lou.* It's been transferred to a Chinese junk."

"And you haven't yet found a man brave or sober enough to sail that junk up the Yangtze," snapped Agatha. "You're telling me nothing, friend Savanoff."

"Who told you that?" demanded the White Russian, a spasm of anger crossing his face.

"God sees into the heart of all His creatures. I'll make you an offer, Savonoff. Give me the ten thousand tins of milk free, and I'll find you the man to sail your junk and deliver your damned pianos."

"And what is the price of your man?"

"Five thousand Chinese dollars."

"I can get a man for two thousand."

"You can't, and you know it. For five thousand dollars and ten thousand tins of milk I'll get you the best man in Shanghai."

The White Russian tried to swallow something in his fleshy throat.

"You ought to be in the business, Miss Manton," he said, with grudging admiration.

"I'm in God's business, the finest in the world. Is it a deal?"

"Who is your man?"

Agatha pulled the surprised Hayter forward.

"Here he is. An Englishman, stupid but honest. And he knows the Yangtze better than you know your favorite sing-song house."

SAVONOFF regarded the slim young man through the haze of cigarette smoke.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"His name is Robinson, Jack Robinson," interposed Agatha.

"Is he dumb?" asked the White Russian.

"Almost, but this is my deal," declared Agatha. "Let's waste no more of

God's time. Get the tins of milk aboard the junk. We'll be ready to sail at midnight."

"What! Are *you* going?"

"You bet I'm going. There's only one trifle to complete this deal."

"And what is that?"

"Five thousand Chinese dollars—cash," declared Agatha.

"Do you imagine I carry all that money about with me?" drawled Savonoff, the spasm of anger crossing his face again.

"And more," nodded Agatha. "You know that in China your own skin is safer than a bank."

With a faint shrug of his shoulders, Savonoff produced a wallet and counted a pile of notes. Agatha counted them equally carefully. She stowed them away in the pocket of her riding breeches. Then she spotted the glass of gin and lime which the Chinese waiter had put on the table.

She took it.

"May God be with us!" she said, finishing it at one gulp. Then, retrieving her umbrella, she marched out of the restaurant followed by the agitated Hayter.

"Look here, Agatha," he began, on the pavement. "You can't let me in for this sort of thing. I'm a British naval officer, and—"

"Don't be a fool, young man. This is Christian work. And it will keep you out of mischief. Here's twenty dollars." She handed it over, grudgingly. "I told that too pretty assistant of mine, Laura, that you would be taking her to lunch at the Tower Restaurant today. Why you should lose your heart over my best assistant, Heaven alone can explain. You've ruined her as a mission worker, anyhow. She's never been the same since you came on the scene. Now go and enjoy yourself at lunch, and pick me up at ten o'clock this evening."

"You're either an angel or an old devil!" declared Hayter.

"Whether I go to heaven or hell, there'll be plenty of work to do," declared Agatha.

And outstretching her umbrella to hold back the coolie pulling the headless body in the rickshaw, she marched in determined fashion across the road.

* * *

AFTER two days of maneuvering a junk over the muddy waters of the Yangtze Kiang River, Lieutenant-Commander Hayter was heartily glad that he was nearing his journey's end.

From his position near the huge matting sail, he could see the bows of the junk rising in tiers like the steps of a pagoda. It gave the impression that the crazy craft was sailing backwards. Writhing dragons and horrifying demons decorated the bows. But to emphasize that this was a family craft engaged in peaceful business, a few solemn-faced Chinese sat with their inevitable tin trunks on deck in full view.

They had been eyed through binoculars by little Japanese naval officers, alertly watchful on the decks of destroyers anchored in the river. Once, with a pang, Hayter saw his own ship, *Odysseus,* indifferently watching his passing. No one was likely to realize that the tin trunks on which the Chinese passengers loafed indolently contained high explosives. Or that the lithe figure in Chinese dress, whose head was covered with the wide, straw hat of a coolie, was in reality a British naval officer cursing himself for being led astray by a missionary harridan.

Agatha was down below. No mistaking her activities. A wheezy harmonium was sounding, and a familiar tune came floating into that Oriental afternoon:

"Onward Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war. . . ."

With only two days' teaching the Chinese crew were shrilling the unfamiliar words in their squeaky voices. To the Englishman on deck, it suggested the unreal sounds of a Walt Disney menagerie.

He was profoundly relieved when the hymn finished, and the service was brought to an end with a loud, aggressive prayer from Agatha.

Then came the noise of clanking buckets and the swish of brooms. Agatha was enforcing the cleanliness next to godliness spirit with which she had pervaded the junk from the moment they entered the Yangtze.

She now materialized, as grim and forbidding as one of those demons painted on the bows. The gray casque of hair was unruffled. The jersey had the sleeves rolled up. The smell of soap was on her hands. She had been showing the Chinese sailors how to clean up. Her horn-rimmed spectacles glinted menacingly at the muddy waters, the low banks, the Chinese white of the afternoon sky.

"Too much dirt about this ship," she declared distastefully. "No wonder these poor souls go heathen in such an atmosphere." She glimpsed the Chinese sitting on the boxes. "What in the name of hell are these lousy sinners doing?"

To the horror of watchful Oriental eyes she had reached out for that dreaded weapon, the umbrella, which lay on the deck.

Immediately there was a scuttering as of rats.

"Leave them alone, Agatha," laughed Hayter. "They're meant as a blind for any Jap craft that may come nosing round."

"I'm not frightened of any Jap gunboat," snorted Agatha, flourishing her umbrella. "I once fought my way out of a tough Chicago joint where men were pulling guns on each other. God was with me."

"And that same umbrella, eh?" chuckled Hayter.

"Of course it was the same umbrella. I wouldn't—"

She stopped. Hayter was staring ahead with an intent gaze. She turned her stubborn head in the same direction. All that she could see was a black blob on the muddy surface.

"What is it?" she asked. "Are our Chinese friends already at the rendezvous?"

Hayter had levelled his binoculars.

"A Jap submarine is waiting for us," he said quietly. "They've got three men at the gun, for'ard. They're launching a boat with an officer and five men. They're going to board us. Looks like they expected us."

"Give me the glasses," said Agatha.

She stared intently for a few seconds. She handed the binoculars back to Hayter. There was murder in her eyes.

"So Serge Savonoff double-crossed us all nicely. I might have guessed the devil was in his heart," she said, bitterly.

"I don't understand, Agatha."

"No, you're too honest. You haven't dealt with sinners as I have. Sometimes you've got to force God down their lying throats. Hasn't it dawned upon you that this river trip has been too darned peaceful? We've passed Jap gunboats that haven't looked twice at us, let alone trouble to board us. Why? Because Serge Savonoff, having sold this cargo to Chinese agents in Shanghai and collected the cash, then tipped off the Japs that the stuff would be unloaded at this rendezvous.

"I'll bet the Japs paid him a nice sum for the information. They'll not only help themselves to a valuable cargo, but they'll massacre any Chinese, even women and children, who come down to the river to collect those tins of milk."

"So that's the sort of dirty deal we've been given?"

"You bet it is, brother. Savonoff is the devil's diplomat in this game."

"Looks as though it's all up, Agatha. They're signaling us to heave to. And there's the Jap flag going up."

Like a blood-spattered ensign, the Rising Sun fluttered above the submarine.

AGATHA seemed to be praying aloud with great determination.

"They're not going to get my ten thousand tins of milk, or those heathens below, whom I just baptized and brought to God," she declared, loudly.

"How can you stop them?"

She looked at him with grim contempt.

"Are you the man who risked his career to save Chinese women and children who were being slaughtered? Are you the man whom Laura, my best assistant, has gone goofy about because of his bravery? Have you lost your faith in God, brother?"

"But, Agatha, there's only one thing to do, and—"

"Do it, you stupid Christian. Fight

'em! Come on—we've got guns and ammunition, haven't we?"

"I can't fight with you aboard, Agatha."

"You'll fight because I *am* aboard. . . . Here, you!" She pointed the umbrella like a sword at a group of Chinese. "Smash that case open and load the gun."

"This is madness, Agatha!" shouted Hayter, as an axe splintered a piano case.

"It's a Christian battle," roared Agatha. "And God is on our side. Think of those ten thousand tins of milk, brother! You give your orders, and I'll round up the stragglers."

Waving her umbrella, she dived down below.

Hayter snapped his orders. The coolies swung at the matting sail. He left the crazy rudder in the hands of an old Chinaman, and rushed to the gun that was nosing out of the wooden case. The crew began to understand that they were to fight the Japanese. They responded with glee.

It was as though they had been invited to a firework display.

A case of shells materialized. Men with rifles and Thompson guns tumbled on deck and crouched behind the bulwarks. A box of hand-grenades spilled open. Two men were struggling from down below with the harmonium. Agatha, wielding her umbrella, urged them on.

"Get below, woman!" shouted Hayter.

"If I'm going to hell or heaven, I'll do it under God's sky," was her snorted reply.

Boom!

A spout of water drenched the high bows of the junk. The submarine had fired a warning shell.

"Down sail!" shouted Hayter.

With a fiendish clatter, the matted sheet tumbled to the deck.

"Now lie low, all of you!" he ordered. "Don't show yourselves. When I hoist the Chinese flag"— He showed the crumpled rag held in his hand—"open fire. The whole damn lot of you!"

Agatha, to his amazement, had seated herself at the harmonium and was playing gently. There was a rapturous expression behind those horn-rimmed spectacles. The deadly umbrella was within reach, lying on the top of the harmonium.

Drifting in the current, the junk slowed down. The submarine, like a sinister basking shark, lay waiting. A small boat with an armed party of Japanese sailors rowed towards the junk. The grinning yellow face of the officer was fixed on Hayter, who stood on the deck, a rifle concealed at his feet.

The officer lifted a megaphone. He shouted something incomprehensible in Chinese. Hayter looked at his *serang*.

"He tells us he wants stepladder over side."

"Throw it over!"

A rope-ladder was dropped. Only the gentle slap of the tide against the wooden hull and the faint plash of oars in the distance broke the tense silence.

"Wait, damn you, wait!" whispered Hayter to the restive, crouching Chinese.

The rowing-boat came nearer. He judged it to be thirty yards.

"Now!" he yelled, tugging at the rope and hoisting the Chinese flag on high.

THERE was a deafening roar of exploding guns. Hayter had dropped to the deck and sighted quickly with his rifle. The water round the rowboat was spattered as if with hail. He jerked the trigger.

The Japanese officer crumpled and pitched into the river.

Other figures lurched after him. The steel decks of the distant submarine suddenly became alive. Hayter realized that a gun was swivelling in their direction. Bending low, he ran along the deck to the gun which had emerged from the packing-case. A Chinese, bare to the waist, his lemon skin taking on the same color as the sky, had slammed a shell into the breech.

Muttering his elevation and range, Hayter sighted on the submarine. But the other gun was already belching. A puff of smoke and the howl of rushing steel. The deck was swept as though a typhoon had suddenly struck the junk. Three Chinese sailors whisked into space.

In the acrid tang of smoke he could not see Agatha. But he could hear her.

The harmonium had taken on a martial note. And she herself was singing in that hoarse, whisky voice:

"Onward Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war. . . ."

The Chinese were firing like demons possessed. They blazed at the submarine with every conceivable type of weapon. Hayter could not repress a chuckle at the sight of one of the Chinese who bounded the whole length of the deck to hurtle one hand-grenade after another at the submarine towards which the junk was drifting.

"Hoist the sail!" shouted Hayter.

At the same time he jerked the trigger of the gun. The recoil was tremendous. But it worked. He saw the submarine receive a drenching shower of spray.

"Missed, blast it!" he yelled.

"Put your faith in God, brother!" yelled back Agatha.

The sail creaked up. The junk began to move.

A second shell from the submarine came screaming towards them. It tore a huge hole in the sail and spattered the deck with shrapnel. Two Chinese fell bleeding at the foot of the mast.

Once again Hayter fired. This time he saw the shell explode against the submarine and a group of figures flung like dolls across the steel decks.

The Chinese crew yelled their enthusiasm. But they were too soon. Another and deadlier shell was screaming towards them. It ploughed the deck mercilessly. It left a trail of limp figures. Hayter was waiting for the inevitable explosion of all that material below. It never came. A perspiring lemon skin had slammed another shell into the breech. He sighted, malevolently, and jerked the trigger.

"Got the swine!" he exulted.

The submarine had lurched at the impact. A huge hole was torn in the gray hull. Figures were scampering the steel decks. An officer flourished a pistol. He was ignored. The men dived into the muddy waters and began to strike out for the banks of the river. Hayter saw madness in the eyes of three of his Chinese sailors who, with cutlasses between their teeth, dived from the junk and swam relentlessly towards the floundering Japanese. At that moment the submarine canted, lifted its nose skywards and slid to the bottom.

Hayter turned his eyes from the scene. He looked down at the torn deck. Agatha, her gray hair still smooth and unruffled, a cigarette between her lips, was bandaging one of the wounded Chinese. She looked up.

"Praise God who helped us," she nodded. "Let's get on to the rendezvous. There are starving women and children who need that milk."

Hayter, the exultation still in his eyes, turned to the *serang*. But it was only a mangled corpse that lay at his feet.

His exultation died—

There came the sound of massed chanting from the distance. The crew rushed to the side and looked towards the bank of the river. It was a strange sight in the rapidly fading light. Hundreds of Chinese women, some with babies at their breasts, others with children tugging at the black trousers, were gathered there singing a hymn of praise to the brave men of the battered junk that now ploughed victoriously towards them.

Hayter found a wounded man who had crawled forward to touch his hand. Those women and children crowding the bank were still shrilling their strange, unearthly hymn.

"The glory is yours, Agatha," he said, quietly.

"God bless you, brother," replied Agatha, simply.

"I ORDERED you to report yourself here, Commander Hayter, because I have news for you," said the admiral of the China Squadron, sitting at his desk in the cabin of the battle cruiser, H.M.S. Trojan.

"Yes, sir."

Pale and stiff, Hayter waited for the doom of his career as a naval officer.

"The Admiralty has decided to overlook your—er, excessive zeal in the interpretation of orders, but warn you that any further breach of neutrality will be severely dealt with. It has therefore been suggested that, with a private reprimand from myself, the matter might be dismissed."

Hayter gasped. The admiral removed his monocle. A grin spread the weatherbeaten face.

"I might add, strictly for your private information, Commander, that your suspension from duty was necessary as a sop to the severe Japanese diplomatic protests that were lodged. If I had been in your shoes on that particular occasion, I— But, then, I'm no longer a young man."

"I thank you, sir."

The monocle was clamped back.

"Consider yourself reprimanded, Commander."

"Yes, sir."

"And now, permit me to offer my congratulations on the announcement of your engagement which I see in today's newspaper. When is the event to be?"

"Tomorrow, sir."

"I take it I'm invited?"

"Of course, sir. Thank you, sir."

"I have a weakness for weddings," chuckled the admiral. "Always make a fool of myself with the bridesmaids."

"There's a splendid one for this occasion, sir. Agatha Manton."

"Bosuns' bells! That missionary hag. Well, I'll face her. After the wedding, though, there'll be orders for you."

"Yes, sir?"

"You'll rejoin the *Odysseus* and take her up river. There's a report of some Englishman calling himself Jack Robinson playing the bloody pirate. Sank one of the Jap's latest submarines. Better get hold of him, if you can. He sounds dangerous, as well as a splendid fellow."

"I'll do my best, sir."

Hayter felt certain that the admiral winked as he saluted and marched away. . . .

He hurried to that restaurant in the demolished suburb of Shanghai. He was disappointed to see only one dubiously feminine figure sitting at a table on the pavement. It was Agatha, still in the same gray jersey and execrable riding-breeches.

"Where's Laura?" he asked. "I've got some splendid news for her."

"Where should she be, but doing the work that has to be done?" growled Agatha. "She may be marrying you tomorrow, young man, but until then she's a missionary worker. I've got her superintending at a soup kitchen the other side of Shanghai."

"You're a woman without mercy," grinned Hayter. "But you're a grand sort, all the same."

"Don't come the devil's smooth praise with me," snorted Agatha. "What's the news, anyhow?"

"I'm reinstated. Still commander of the *Odysseus.* Isn't that fine?"

"I'm mighty glad, brother," said Agatha, stretching out a rough, workaday hand to pat his. "It also means that while you're away aboard that steel ship, I can get Laura at work again."

Hayter was silent for a moment. Then he looked up at that grim, determined face.

"I forgot to tell you, Agatha. The admiral is going to attend the wedding."

Her jaw clenched.

"That gold-braided unbeliever! The worst news I've heard today. Well, I'll face him. But order me another gin and lime at once, I need it."

Hayter laughed, and gave the order to the impassive waiter.

At that moment, a wrinkled old coolie with shaven head trailed a headless body in a rickshaw along the rubbish-strewn street. He was eyed watchfully by the inevitable Japanese sentries. *"This man smuggled arms to the Chinese,"* announced posters in Chinese and English.

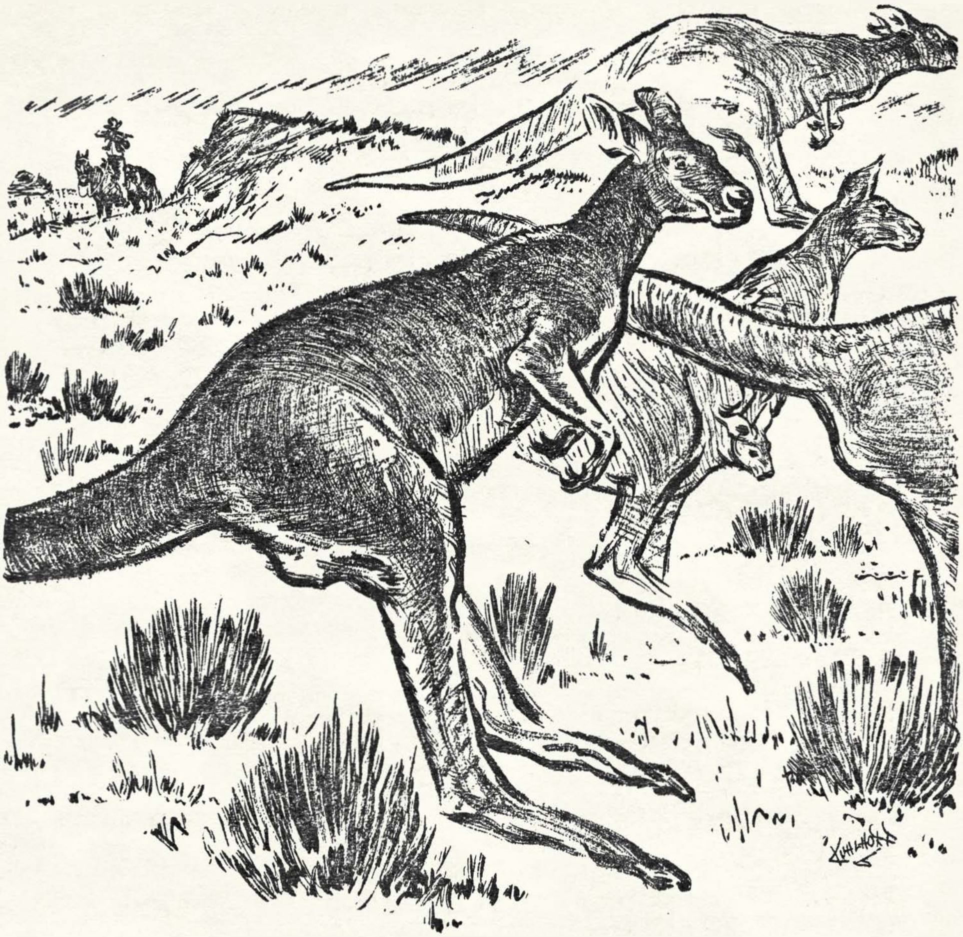
"Recognize him?" asked Agatha, pointing with her umbrella.

Hayter felt sick. There was no mistaking the fat body, the podgy hands. Only the moon-faced head, the color of dirty parchment, was missing.

"Serge Savonoff!"

"Yes," nodded Agatha, lighting a cigarette and puffing away the smoke. "A devil who deserved to die. The Japanese decided he had double-crossed them. And they couldn't afford to lose a first-class submarine. . . . May God have mercy on his soul."

The headless body in the rickshaw trailed past at a funereal pace.



The big booma swung behind to shepherd the females and young in their flight. . . .

OLD MAN KANGAROO

By LOUIS KAYE

THE sun was edging down to the great red plain when MacQuarrie sighted the old man kangaroo's herd. Twenty-three does and young bucks, led by the boss of the tribe, burst from an oasis of desert bulwaddy and went bounding for the nearest ridge in the plain. The big *booma* had scented man and was losing no time in getting his charges away. But MacQuarrie had a gun.

Jerking it from the saddle boot, he drew a bead on the big 'un and fired. He knew immediately he had missed and swore at the glare of the setting sun as reason for it. Then, stock still on his trained horse, he waited.

MacQuarrie was a professional kangaroo man, not an amateur, and he knew what the leader of the herd would do next. The big *booma* dropped out of the vanguard and swung around behind to shepherd the females and young in their flight. With them safely over the ridge, he perched on the crest of it, half squatting, in dark silhouette against the western sky, and MacQuarrie saw his long thin head turn to glance back.

This was the easy target MacQuarrie had been waiting for, but still he paused for an instant before firing. He killed to live, but never could he quite rid himself of his instinctive dislike of shooting at an old man of the herd who squats to look back in triumph when the young and weak are out of the way.

MacQuarrie's lips tightened; he squeezed the trigger, and was aware as the rifle kicked his shoulder that the *booma* had moved ahead in the same split-second.

Sometimes they took a dozen bounds after being hit. MacQuarrie left his pack horses, unleashed his kangaroo dogs and spurred up to the ridge. The herd was streaming across the flat gibber country beyond and the old man was leaping strongly in pursuit. A miss, MacQuarrie thought, and against all reason was pleased.

But then he saw what the *booma* had left behind on the ridge. The shot had gone home after all, marked by a thin web of spattered blood in the dust. MacQuarrie cursed again, nor was it the loss of a handsome pelt that was turning in his mind. It wasn't his code to wound and leave an animal to die slowly: the stain in the dust meant trekking after the herd as long as the light lasted, on the chance that the old man would drop out soon.

Returning for his pack horses, he crossed the ridge again and started slogging over the burning gibber flat.

MacQuarrie was thirty, spare as most men of his kind are, the hunters of the back-blocks of Australia. He fitted into the country almost in the sense of protective camouflage, even as its animals fit into it in coloring and physical wants. He had no love for its bony gauntness, its heat, its sudden wind and storming dust.

He suffered these for kangaroo pelts, which meant money, which meant, by and by, a little sheep station close to the fertile coast and a girl who was waiting there for him.

MacQuarrie held that future before him through the days and nights of an isolation complete except for his dogs and horses and, occasionally, the glimpse of a black fleeting aborigine. He was hoping to be out of it soon. With the load of pelts slung to his pack horses now, he thought there might be enough for the stake he wanted, depending on the price they brought.

He kept to the herd's tracks until darkness washed them out. "Just scratched him, I guess," he thought, fixing his camp for the night. "Otherwise he'd have dropped before this." And with that, he dismissed the wounded kangaroo from his mind.

IT was more than a scratch. The big red *booma* lay on his side under a dead-finish tree and watched the herd as it slept in the next day's noontime heat. In moonlight's cool they would graze here on sweet shoots among the trees where in the rainy season water ran over the earth from the creek bed, now dry save for a pool two miles away. Old Booma knew better than to camp close to the water, for dingo packs came there, and the python, and man. He knew man, black and white. One killed from nearby, one from afar; as enemies, there was no other difference.

He could have slept in safety now, for a young buck was on lookout, but the pain in his foot would not permit it. The blood had dried, but a little broken bone showed through the tear and it would not heal for a long time. Perhaps Old Booma did not know this consciously, but he did know that it was a troublemaker, far worse than the gash on his hip left years ago by another white hunter's gun.

He was not a killer himself; he was a grass-eater, and he lived in peace except when some upstart challenged his leadership. The criss-crossed welts on his belly showed how often he had fought to maintain it. But even these fights were not to the death but only to make the challenger's belly sorer than his own. Once he had got his short, strong arms around a young buck's neck and doused him in a waterhole until he nearly drowned; he seldom became so enraged as that. It sufficed to balance on the mighty tail and punch and slash with the long clawed feet until the other had had enough.

Something moist touched the bad foot. Old Booma saw that it was a doe, mouthing the wound to heal it. She salved it gently for several minutes and squatted and with quick movements of her arms kept the flies from settling there. The old man watched her. She was not a young doe, but she always came to him in danger and trouble. For a few weeks now there had been a baby in her pouch. Presently the youngster hopped right out at him.

He caught it in his arms, held its head against his throat and nipped its ear. The baby's hind foot clouted him on the nose and the old man let it go and feinted playfully for a while. But the wound was hurting him and soon he took no more notice of the game, so the baby went back to its mother's pouch. Old Booma turned on his side to ease the throbbing.

He saw that a big buck, marked by a long scar down his belly, was squatted nearby, watching him. As he stared back, the other rose upright on great legs and tail and punched the air threateningly, and the old man knew that Long Scar had sensed his weakness and was challenging for leadership.

There could not have been a worse time, but he rose to answer.

The slumbering herd roused quickly at the drumming sound of foot on belly and squatted around as men might take grandstand seats to watch boxers in a squared ring. The similarity was even greater in the way challenger and champion faced each other, blocking, punching, lunging.

They punched, true, with their feet, not arms, with the full power of the thick leg muscles, supported by the massive braced tails, but they clinched as boxers clinch and sparred for the best hold obtainable.

They were of a height, Old Booma and Long Scar; the difference was in that one foot, which had no weight in it and could not be used for attack; and more than this, in age. Probably the herd knew it was time for a new boss to lead and to ward off danger, and probably it cared little.

And the old man was weary already. Long Scar struck repeatedly, shoving him off with punching forearms as he tried for a clinch. He could not give blow for blow, and the curved claws ripped and thumped his belly and shreds of his fur went drifting in the dust and wind of the drumming feet. There was only one attack for him. Like a punch-drunk boxer, he leaned forward suddenly and hooked his arms around the other's neck and hung on with all his weight. His good foot shifted and swept down, raking the long belly where he had scarred it before. And now Long Scar's fur scattered and he heaved to break free of the clinch.

Old Booma held hard.

Then they broke, and in that instant of separation the fight was done. The herd was leaping away from them on all sides. Old Booma saw the reason why even as he pivoted and thrust with legs and tail in his first bound. Hunters had come from nowhere; not white men, but black, the men of the desert, and close enough to launch their weapons at him. Spears whined through the air and clattered on the gibber rocks, and dark whirling shapes hummed past, the heavy boomerangs.

EVEN sore-footed and leaping off-balance, Old Booma could outpace a man; but when after some desperate minutes of flight he paused to look back, he knew a greater fear.

These blacks were not on foot. Two of them rode horses.

For all the haze of exhaustion in his mind he knew he could not get away from a horse. The hoofs sounded nearer. He thrust sideways at a sharp angle and in a dozen leaps gained a bulwaddy thicket, and there lay trembling.

The horses with their naked riders drove past. But the black hunters were clever; they could read the ground; they would be back. He waited, in pain and fear.

The blacks were a party of Myalls, wild raiders of the desert; and the horses they rode were MacQuarrie's. And MacQuarrie was bushed.

That was bad enough. Into the bargain he had a cracked rib, where a boomerang had caught him.

The Myalls came across his hobbled horses at dawn and swept them up as fair spoil. Their surprise attack was within an ace of costing MacQuarrie not only his pelts but his life. He saved both by answering attack with attack, pumping shots into the thick of the Myalls and plunging recklessly toward them with his lean and snarling dogs at his side. They had no heart for a white hunter apparently gone berserk, and they faltered, shifted and ran, melting into nothingness as if swallowed by the sand; but not before that last boomerang whipped underneath MacQuarrie's arm and slashed his side.

He knew by the pain movement cost him that it was a rib, maybe two. He washed it, teeth gritted; then he sat down to think things over as the sun came blazing high.

He had the pelts; he had his dogs, a rifle, a grub bag and some water. Without horses, the margin wasn't enough. He was a hundred miles at least out from the nearest settlement. He told himself calmly he could not make it, considering what agony the wound would be after the sun had worked on it. There was no choice: he must follow the Myalls' tracks in the hope of overtaking them and regaining his horses.

It was not altogether hopeless. The Myalls would not expect him to be on their trail. They would not travel rapidly; their progress was always haphazard, and the speed of the men on foot would hold back the men on horse. A horse, to MacQuarrie, was life itself; legs to carry him when his own were snapped by wound, sand and sun.

He had slung grub and water bags over his shoulders; rifle in hand, he had started wearily over the burning shale where the imprint of bare black feet led.

But a full day later, every hope he had doggedly held on to went glimmering in the haze. He had lost the tracks, and he was fair bushed.

IT is a funny word for desert country, where there is little or no bush, but it is in that country that it has its grimmest meaning—a country where the landscape seen today is the same as that seen yesterday, and the day before, and before, endlessly; a land of glaring gibber plains and sand ridges that curve all alike. It is not a shameful thing to lose one's bearings in such territory, but MacQuarrie knew that other men of his kind would laugh if they learned how he had bungled and set himself hopelessly adrift, just as he knew how they would shake their heads sadly if he never got out, which now seemed highly probable.

It was bad, all right. The rib was a belt of pain in his side and his head felt as if it would drop of its own weight. He tried to grin, just to feel better, but the cracked, sore lips couldn't shape a smile.

Still, he wasn't the man to die in any way but on his feet. He moistened his lips from the water bag and poured a few drops into the panting mouths of his dogs. Then he took a guess and went floundering off in the sand, bound for anywhere.

It was because his head was bent so low that he found the other tracks.

They weren't man tracks, nor horse tracks. MacQuarrie stared at them through the slits his eyes had become. The big marks were easy to read: kangaroo.

"A 'roo's got to drink sometime," he mumbled. "He knows where water is and he's headin' for it. He'll get there, too, if they don't drag him down first."

There were smaller tracks alongside. They were left by the pads of dingo dogs; hunters too, as the Myalls were, but far more patient.

MacQuarrie tried to hurry.

The blacks had not come back for Old Booma where he lay hidden in the thicket—although he could not know it of course, the horses had been out of control when they went charging past and had carried their riders far beyond. Saved on that count, he had risen at last, moved cautiously out of the bulwaddy and picked his way along a belt of salt-bush. He kept going even when the cover came to an end and he was on an open plain. Instinct was guiding him to water, but he would go far before he found it.

In mid-afternoon, sharp pointed ears showed on a sand ridge, and slant eyes watched the labored progress of the old man kangaroo. For Old Booma's foot was badly swollen and he was moving on all fours, favoring it as much as he could. The dingo dropped away, but in a few minutes it showed again, and now there was a companion with it, and a minute later there was another, and still another. Soon the full half dozen came loping down, to sniff at the tracks Old Booma left, to glance around and back, and then to settle to a patient trailing. Patience was their chief stock in trade, of courage they had little. Still, it would increase as their bellies emptied.

Before it was quite dark, Old Booma found a patch of bulwaddy and snugged up in it. The dingos could smell him there but not see him. When they drew close he moved his tail in the coarse dry grass.

A snake makes the same sound. It kept him safe for a while.

But at moonrise he had to come out or be chased out. Bad foot or no, he took the former. He came out in three big bounds, a hulking, grotesque shape. It shattered the pack's nerve and they went skittering back. Not for long: the smell of dried blood of his wound was irresistible, and they did not give up as they sometimes did if they thought an old man 'roo would fight before he had run too far to be winded.

By noon the next day they had closed up a good deal, and that night, the hunger driving them crazy, they rushed him.

They came in with a flurry, snapping and snarling, lips shivering over bared fangs. Old Booma's hind foot knocked one sprawling, flung a second five feet with ripped flank; then he went up in the air almost vertically and shook the others free. When he dropped down to balance and strike out again, the pack drew off, stiff-legged, raging, and he had a moment's respite.

THE second rush was as sudden as the first, and this time a dingo got teeth into his hip flesh and tore a hole there. The blood flowed, but not even the smell of it drove the dogs to a third try. Old Booma's good hind foot had marked five of them by now, and although not badly hurt, it was enough to recommend patience once more.

They let him limp away. They sniffed the ground where the blood had splashed. Then they followed.

That afternoon, he found the water he needed so much. It was a clay hole with a patch of scrub and a lone mulga tree. He filled himself, but the water left him weaker rather than refreshed; it had been too long since he had eaten. He nibbled herbage that was green and sweet, then dragged his body to the shade and lay there, watching.

The dingos waded belly-deep in the hole as they drank. They turned to where Old Booma was stretched on his side. An old man 'roo, too worn out to stand up and defy them; but still they respected the great legs and tough hind claws.

They shifted and inched back and forth; and then suddenly they froze with pointed ears as the rustle of brush sounded clearly.

A kangaroo bounded high in the air and leaped straight to Old Booma's side.

And he knew her well enough. It was the doe that had salved his wound, and in her pouch was the baby he had played with. She was breathing hard and still trembling with fear. Stronger than his weakness, the protective instinct stirred in the old man and forced him up—up on his hind legs again, up on the great balancing tail. Perhaps he sensed that the doe, separated too from the herd in the rush of the Myalls' attack, had struggled wearily over the miles of desolate country as he had, in search of water, not only for herself but for the young she sheltered. So he rose up to face the pack a last time, and he must have sensed that too, that it would be the last. He could send them sprawling headlong for a while, but their strength was six times his and eventually they would strike through and cut the tired muscles and bring him down a helpless mass of flesh. And then they would kill the doe, the weaker one, and then the weakest.

She huddled close behind him, her short arms shielding the baby in her pouch. Together they watched the lean grinning faces edge in, and Old Booma stood braced to his fullest strength. So they waited. Then a dingo leaped with a squawl of hunger.

The old man's good hind leg lashed out and caught it fairly. The dog hurtled back in a tumble, yelping its pain, its right ear cut half from its head. It was the spur the others needed and now in a mass they plunged at him. Not fully recovered from the blow he had delivered, Old Booma was for an instant off balance, and in that instant their weight bowled him over.

There was a threshing flurry and wild sounds and the click of fangs. And then there was a louder sound, so loud that it pulled the dogs off. They turned almost as one. They raced toward the figure that stood on a sand ridge until their red eyes understood what their hunger-fevered brains and blood-filled nostrils had not quickly enough grasped.

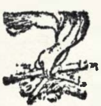
This was man, with rifle at shoulder, firing steadily. The pack braked on haunches and bolted, those that hadn't understood too late.

That was how MacQuarrie came at last to water. He went to it and drank, slowly, sip by sip, then greedily until he forced himself to stop. He stood by the waterhole and stared at the kangaroos while his dogs filled themselves. The old man 'roo was up on his legs again. He was too weak to run; he was too weak to fight; there was nothing he could do anyway against a rifle. But he was on his legs nevertheless, and MacQuarrie smiled.

The water had increased his light-headedness and he was thinking that the old man was waiting for him to speak.

"Don't worry," he said. "You saved my life, you know that? You led me to water, chum, so I was firin' at the dogs, not at you. Go on, lie down again. I guess we all need a rest."

He did, certainly. He had no more strength than to tie up his two kangaroo dogs before he collapsed in the shade and slept.



WHEN he woke it was dawn, and he felt better. He drank again and ate from the small remaining store in his grub bag. He had fully expected the kangaroos to be gone, but they weren't, and it surprised him.

The old man was lying down now, his eyes on him. MacQuarrie's face was puzzled.

"What's the trouble?" he said.

He moved closer. The doe chuttered uneasily and the big one shifted as if trying to rise, so MacQuarrie stood still.

"Never seen a 'roo act like you're acting," he said. "You got something wrong with you?"

Then he saw the foot.

His dogs were growling, so he went back and tied them and, on another thought, put down his rifle. This time he got within a dozen steps of the old man before the doe stirred and chuttered.

MacQuarrie squatted and peered at the swollen foot.

"It was a gun did that," he muttered. The thought struck him as he said it. "Say," he said, "I bet you're the *booma* I hit back there days ago!"

The longer he looked at the wound, the surer he was of it. He shook his head soberly.

"It's tough," he said. "Tough luck all around." He stared at the old man's eyes, watching him steadily. He couldn't see any fear there; he half convinced himself that what he saw was conscious understanding.

"You see how it is, don't you?" he asked. "It's just ruddy rotten luck. You see, chum, here I am, and—"

A man hangs on to what is left. At first MacQuarrie had been concerned about his pelts and his horses. Now all he had left was his life. What he had to do was clear. He would rest by the waterhole to let cracked rib and cut flesh mend, to recondition himself for the long, uncertain hike back toward where he thought and hoped the nearest settlement was. And his grub bag was about gone.

"You see how it is, don't you?" he asked again.

But he put it off for a while, and when he came back later after another sleep the baby kangaroo was hopping around the old man, skittishly feinting and tapping with its tiny arms. MacQuarrie grinned and walked up closer than ever, and neither the old man nor the doe seemed to mind.

"All friends, eh?" MacQuarrie said. "Well, you got the wrong idea."

After a couple of minutes the youngster gave up trying to lure the old man into a game and squatted, and its soft brown eyes studied MacQuarrie. MacQuarrie stuck out his forefinger. The baby craned forward and then took a tentative little hop toward him. The doe chuttered nervously and it went back, but only for a few seconds. MacQuarrie held out his finger again and finally the baby nosed it. Not much later MacQuarrie was holding it in his hands, and maybe it felt much the same as when Old Booma clasped it, but in any event the baby didn't object, and when MacQuarrie blew gently into one of its ears, it thumped him lustily with a hind foot. So he thumped it back.

They played for quite a while.

"To hell with it," MacQuarrie said. "I can't do it."

The next day, his grub gave out altogether.

He didn't remember much about the three days that followed. He remembered that his dogs fed off the two dingos he had shot, and he remembered that at some time he bowled over a rabbit with a lucky snap aim and that its flesh lasted him for a full day or maybe more. But the clearest remembrance, and the best, was of the operation.

When that happened he could not say, but he knew that it was a fixed idea that grew until it seemed to be the one thing he had to do before he passed out. He thought that he managed it pretty cleverly, considering the hazy state his mind was in. First, he played with the baby, and then he picked it up in his arms and came right to the old man's side. The old man didn't stir and the doe was as placid as a woman in a sewing circle; it was as if uncle had just brought the child in from a romp on the lawn. In fact, that was what MacQuarrie said.

"Here's uncle," he said, "and Master Ronald has been a very good boy."

So then he put the baby down and rested his hand on the old man's bad foot.

"Now take it easy," MacQuarrie said. "There's nothing to worry about. You just ought to feel my rib."

He turned his body so the old man could not see and brought out his case knife. He lifted the suppurating foot and with a few swift movements punctured the swelling and picked out a piece of broken bone. The old man didn't even try to jerk away, but probably the foot was insensitive. Of course that wasn't MacQuarrie's idea. His idea was that he had told the old man not to worry and so, because he had told him to, the old man held still.

MacQuarrie went and lay down then and fell asleep.

His last conscious thought was that, considering everything, he hadn't done badly.

He was dead to the world when the prospector found him, with his dogs howling where they were tied. The prospector brought him around with water and food and explained as he fed him how he had come across his tracks a day before and followed them to the hole.

"I guess I got to you just in time," he said.

MacQuarrie nodded feebly. "That you did, mate."

"There was some kangaroos parked up there in the shade," the prospector said. "An old man, a doe and a baby. The old man looked kind of lame. He seemed to be favoring one foot a lot when they went off."

"He was lame," MacQuarrie said, "but he'll be all right now."

"How'd you see 'em?" the prospector wanted to know.

"They were here two or three days," MacQuarrie said. "Maybe longer. I sort of lost track of the time."

The prospector stared at him, and shook his head.

"But gosh a'mighty, man, *why didn't you eat them 'roos?*"

MacQuarrie didn't explain, well as he knew the other thought him crazy. It would be difficult trying to tell a case-hardened desert man how he had been a member of the family. A girl, though, the girl back near the coast, he imagined she'd understand.

Any girl ought to be able to understand about a baby.

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

IN Gordon MacCreagh's novelette "Blood and Steel" a scene is played by leopard men, members of a leopard society. It's a subject into which MacCreagh has looked deeply. both by personal observations in Africa and the study of all writings on the subject. His conclusions, as he gives them here, tell what kind of "racket" it looks like to him—in primitive Africa the "rackets" are hidden deep, hard to look into, strange to understand.

There have been learned treatises written by anthropologists trying to connect African leopard societies with the universal primitive folk lore of lycanthropy—I had to look that one up myself; it means were-wolves. Just as in parts of Europe there remains even today a superstition that certain witcheries will turn a person into a wolf, so other parts of the world have their were-hyaenas, were-tigers, leopards, what-not, in keeping with the local fauna.

The commonest story is about the ravening were-wolf shot in the fore leg, escaping amid howls that sound like a curse, and morning revealing the sinister villain of the village nursing a gunshot wound in his arm.

We laugh at the story; yet I suppose there is hardly a traveler into the more out of the way places who hasn't met that same story with astoundingly circumstantial local detail, vouched for by men whose integrity one would hate to question.

The more we investigate those things the less easily we laugh at "superstitions." Let some of you others give me the loud horse laugh when I say that I have with my own eyes, sober and hard boiled, seen were-hyaenas!

Let me quickly qualify that. I have seen men, under the spell of certain witchcraft ceremonies, convinced that they had become hyaenas! So convinced that they ran around on all fours and howled like hyaenas—and actually *dug up human corpses and gnawed at them!*

Men, not beasts. Of course it is an easy step from there for an excited imagination to be convinced that such ravening things in the moonlight might be hyainomorphic, (that's another good one).

I won't risk the laugh that I might draw by telling you of some of the stories told to me by men as sober as missionaries about seeing actual beast hyaenas prancing around right in company with the hyaena men at their grisly feast.

What I'm getting at in all this preamble is that certain scientificos have earnestly set about associating the leopard societies with this wide spread superstition of men becoming beasts by the practise of witchcraft.

I stick my neck out to professorial scorn by venturing to disagree with the anthropological high brows.

From all that I could ever learn about leopard societies—and hidden cults have been my especial hobby—I am convinced that the Wa Chui are no more than a plain secret society, a Mafia or a Ku Klux.

Like the Ku Klux, the Wa Chui started out as a vigilante group with the benevolent object of setting right various wrongs that local laws or local customs were too weak, or too crooked, to cope with.

Masked, the temptation was too great for members to turn their power to personal vengeance and profit. The organization deteriorated rapidly from vigilante to terrorist groups. And, like any gang of hoodlums immune to detection, the opportunities for personal gain were so great that the idea spread over a large portion of Africa.

There was apparently at no time any attempt at organization controlled by a headquarters group; no sinister cult, as some ethnologists have claimed, to control an underground black-man nucleus of disruption against white domination. It was just an idea that took hold; a grand idea of ganging up under masks and scaring the local populace into obedience and payment of tribute. An idea peculiarly appealing to Africa, that is devil-and-darkness-haunted at best.

Civilized governments have tried to root out the idea, and they have, to a great extent, succeeded. Though my own feeling, as a non-official observer, is that the eradication isn't nearly as complete as officials like to claim.

I have seen, in keeping with other African filths and spirit-fendings, entrails festooned along a village thorn fence. Safari boys have looked under their eyelids and have assumed the ox-dumb expression and have said, "Goat sacrifices, against witchcraft." Those have always been jittery villages. On edge. Not till many miles past has the head camp boy, Alui M'buh, (who is the original Kaffa the Hottentot), whispered, "Mahethebu Wa Chui".

Why and who? Who knows? And the buzzards will have cleaned up the evidence long before any policeman comes.

The wiser the white man in Africa, the less he pries into native doings. He waits to be told. And there are all too many things in Africa that a white man never gets told.

NEW member of our Writers' Brigade is this fellow from down under—Louis Kaye. He's done a lot of sheepherding and cattle ranching in the back country—has covered a lot of miles on account, he says, of being lazy.

It's hard for a fellow to write about himself when he's never done anything to write about, and it's doubly hard when the magazine suggesting the piece is *Adventure*. My feeling's always been that *Adventure's* a mighty authentic magazine, so I'm not going to try to kid anybody I've done things I haven't.

Left school at an early age because I was too mentally lazy to absorb any knowledge. Knew I was mentally lazy but didn't know I was physically lazy as well until I found myself a job in the Australian back-country. Seven years on sheep and cattle ranches (stations is the word down-under) and in mines, and I quit hard work for the army. Never saw anything but an Australian parade ground.

Wanted to join the North Australian Mounted Police, but they wouldn't have me. Retaliated by writing yarns about them. Sent them to England and they sold there and in Scandinavian and other countries. Did some novels and got nice reviews but never got rich.

Once when things looked lousy, a man in New York wrote: "Keep going; you'll get some good checks one day."

I've knocked about Australia a lot, and the back-country—the real back-country, I mean, in Central Australian, Western Australian and the Northern Territory—looks to me a good fiction background, though it's hard to handle. Nobody knows much about it, and you can't explain it and describe it in one short piece of fiction. In earlier days I wrote about it for Camp-Fire, and that was my first appearance in *Adventure*. "A Member of the Family" is my first yarn for this magazine.

FIRST Lieutenant Charles E. Chapel, U. S. Marine Corps, who wrote "Guns of Glory" for us, is the gun authority who wrote the recent book "Gun Collecting," published by Coward McCann, a valuable handbook for the gun crank, collector and firearms historian.

Lieutenant Chapel grinds no axes—he tells the story as it happened, how America has improved its guns and won its wars. Yet the facts of that story and the facts between the lines, leave us with a wry and disquieting reaction. The men behind the rifles have won our wars—the equipment we've given them to do their fighting with has handicapped them gravely. It's strange that this should be true in a country that holds a great share of the world's inventiveness, mechanical genius and manufacturing skill. But we've always withheld any real working capital from our Army on the apparent theory (though our history shows a war every generation) that each war is always the last one.

Through superficial newspaper accounts a few months ago the general public gathered that a new conflict would find us ready with a superior military arm, the Garand semi-automatic rifle.

Such an impression seems all wrong.

We'll not have the guns, by present plans, in many years.

Are they good military guns? Meaning by good—accurate and hard-hitting enough, trouble-free enough under adverse conditions, capable of being rushed into large-scale and moderate-cost production in emergency?

For months we've been hearing uneasy reports on the Garand semi-automatic rifle. Grapevine stuff among shooters about back-to-the-factory troubles developed in the field; overheating and lubrication "bugs" in the rifle; possible superiority of the Johnson rifle that was turned down. Facts, hearsay, rumor. We don't know any reason why all our information should be adverse, but the history of the Garand seems to be one of confusion and its present state of satisfaction indeed doubtful.

Will you readers who are experts on the subject look over the following statements and straighten us out if any of them are wrong? We have checked them carefully, and we hope no error exists.

The Garand was originally made and tested in .276 caliber, and adopted because of its excellent performance.

But .276 was not the Army caliber, though an excellent one; but its adoption for the Garand was decided against to avoid two sizes of ammunition, or the obsoletion of all our other .30 caliber weapons.

The Army caliber for rifles and machine guns is .30 caliber. The Garand was not worked out, before adoption, in .30 caliber.

The Army has used two kinds of .30 caliber cartridges. The first was the Springfield .30-06, a 150 grain bullet adopted in 1906. It is known as M-2.

After the World War, the Army developed a better cartridge. The old one was abandoned in favor of a 172-173 grain bullet for the Springfield. Heavier, it carries more shocking power and carries it further. A boat-tail bullet, it is more accurate. It has been universally acclaimed by Army and civilian shooters as truly superior ammunition, and shares honors with the .22 caliber long rifle as the most accurate in the world. It is known as M-1.

The Garand won't handle M-1 satisfactorily—M-1 is too powerful, overheats the chamber, with premature firing, burning handguards, etc. Therefore, to make the gun perform, the Army has returned to the obsoleted M-2.

To avoid two kinds of ammunition, machine guns on land and in aircraft also return to the inferior M-2.

The Garand is an expensive gun to manufacture. A $6,500,000 contract has been awarded to Winchester for 65,000 of them—one hundred dollars apiece. The order will not be filled until midsummer, 1942. Other companies, asked for bids, are reported to have declined, due to manufacturing difficulties. With Springfield Arsenal in full production, able to turn out only several hundred a week (we hear rumors that present output is little over 100) the Army will have perhaps 100,000 of these rifles at the end of two years. In the World War we had 5,000,000 men in the Army, 3,000,000 of them being overseas. The figures include other branches as well as infantry, but 100,000 rifles are a popgun array.

There's much smoke over the matter of the new Garand. There's chance for misgiving whether, because of a decision of some years ago, the Army now falls in line with poorer marksmanship, inferior bullets, slow and expensive output of rifles, in order that the decision be kept inalterable.

Having heard many rumors for some time, but lacking definite and written confirmation of them, we've now found the whole issue raised in the April issue of *The American Rifleman,* which has just gone on sale as we write. We quote from the lead editorial of the official journal of the National Rifle Association of America. The editorial is called—The Courage to Be Frank.

> Frankness frequently requires courage. The much publicized Garand (M-1) rifle coupled with the "M-2" (1906) ammunition has become the center of a growing storm of discussion. Complicated by such other factors as tactical policies and war-time production problems, the situation is easily confused and it is difficult to obtain all the facts. Obviously,

however, matters are reaching a point where the courage is needed to face the facts in a friendly, frank, constructive manner. Unfortunately there have already been injected angles of propaganda, bad temper and an unwarranted fear of offending the "higher-ups" which are dangerous, unnecessary and undesirable from the standpoint of constructive accomplishment.

The following facts are matters of official record or are well known in various circles in Washington:

1. There is a division of opinion within the Services both as to the wisdom of adopting any semi-automatic rifle for general issue and as to practicability of the Garand as a war weapon.

2. The Garand selected by the Infantry Board some ten years ago was designed. for the relatively low pressure .276 cartridge.

3. The insistence of the Chief of Staff on the retention of the more powerful .30 caliber (then the M-1 boat-tail) made it necessary to redesign the Garand.

4. Although the wisdom of exhaustive competitive tests had been recognized and undertaken before the .276 Garand was adopted no such tests were held with the redesigned .30 caliber arm. The present rifle was considered as having been officially adopted on the strength of its performance with the .276 cartridge.

5. Manufacture was started on a production basis before redesign had been completed—as an example, the muzzle-cap gas port has been discarded for a gas port in the barrel. The revised model will not begin coming off the production line until about May 1st. Meanwhile all rifles issued the Regulars and National Guard will be of the discontinued design.

6. As a result of experience in the field the Cavalry Board has already felt it advisable to undertake experiments to improve the methods of lubricating the rifle and to develop a protecting breech cover while the Marine Corps is working on a modification of the front sight.

7. Because of the relatively poorer accuracy of the Garand the Army, in order to maintain the morale of enlisted men by making it possible for them to qualify, has completely revamped its qualification course and the Marine Corps has materially lowered its qualification scores under those previously required with the Springfield.

8. Although Congress materially increased the appropriation over the amount originally requested for tooling up and production of the Garand, Springfield Armory was able to reach a production rate in December, 1939, of only slightly over half the rate which had been indicated to Congress might be expected.

9. Because of difficulties involved in tooling and production only one of the major American arms manufacturers was willing to submit a bid for the production of Garands when bids were requested by the War Department.

10. The manufacture of the excellent M-1 ammunition has been completely discontinued except for the 1940 National Matches. The 1941 National Matches are to be fired with M-2 ammunition. M-2 has been designated as standard for all machine guns including aircraft. M-1 will not be made even on such special orders for large quantities as might be placed by the Director of Civilian Marksmanship.

These readily ascertainable facts raise logical questions—

Are we sufficiently sure of our service of supply and of our fire control discipline to warrant the general issue of any semi-automatic rifle to all troops?

Is the Garand manufacturable on a wartime production basis?

If, as the Ordnance Department has stated, it is only the manufacturing arm of the Services and the Garand and M-2 ammunition are being produced primarily at the request of the Infantry Board, is it to the best interests of national defense for Ordnance to completely discontinue the manufacture of Springfields, spare parts, and M-1 ammunition for other "using services" which are not satisfied with M-2 ammunition or with the Garand in its present state?

Is it to the best interests of national defense to discontinue a cartridge (M-1) which was developed to meet the needs indicated during the World War and to go back to the very cartridge (M-2) which was discarded as a result of those same World War experiences?

Because of its sincere regard for and intimate contacts with the various Services the National Rifle Association regrets the apparent necessity of being the first to publicly raise these questions.

Very urgent it seems to get it all straightened out before, and if, the time ever comes when Americans may be called on to put rifles of one kind or another to their shoulders again.

H. B.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

GOING into dangerous and unexplored country—in Southern Utah.

Request:—I'd like to take a pack trip into the country between the San Juan River and the Colorado, that neck of land. Is there enough water to support horses and also can one go through there on horses? Also do you know anyone near Hite or Hall's Crossing from whom I can get mules?

—Hayden Huston, Daniel, Wyo.

Reply by Mr. C. C. Anderson:—It is a genuine pleasure to receive a letter such as yours because it deals with a part of the country which is not only a hobby, but almost an obsession with me.

It is impossible to describe the Southern Utah country. Gorgeous colors spilled in a riot of splendor. It is the most colossal, awe-inspiring, beautiful and amazing country on the face of the earth. Paradoxically it is also a cruel, grotesque, barren, God-forsaken desert of rock and sand.

The important thing is water as you mention. In your country the water is all on the surface, but there the water, if there is any, is underground. The year-around streams, of course, are to be found in the bottom of deep perpendicular gorges and canyons from a thousand feet to a mile deep. But it is the underground hidden water that you will have to depend on for yourselves and animals. So there is water, if you know how to find it, and you can get over practically all of that country with horses. You may have to carry grain for your horses.

You mention Hite and Hall's crossings. There is a ranch at Hite but I do not know the present owners. I am completely mystified as to where you picked up anything about Hall's Crossing. Charles Hall discovered this so-called crossing about 1878, about 15 miles above the mouth of the Escalante River. It was seriously considered as a short cut for a band of Mormon Pioneers in 1879, but abandoned in favor of the Hole in the Rock crossing which almost took 250 lives, but didn't, by good fortune and super-human perseverance. To my knowledge it has never been used as a crossing. In 1893 when Cass Hite started a gold rush around Navajo Mountain I understand a ferry was used at Hall's Crossing, but I am unable to verify it and it assumes the familiar air of a myth. Just where you would go from either side of the river is also a mystery. There is not a house or ranch from Hite south to near Navajo Mountain, or from the environs of Bluff, Utah to Henrieville and other towns on the west.

Hall's Crossing, Hole in the Rock and the Crossing of the Fathers are all snares. No habitations on either side of any of them and unless you have some particular reason for going there I would suggest you forget it.

Cass Hite built a cabin at what is now known as Hite about 1871. His object was gold. At that time it was thought the Henry Mountains were the source of the fabulously rich mines that produced the gold the Spanish Conquistadores looted from the Indians. Hite made a living for years by washing out fine gold and started the gold rush mentioned when he stated that the coarse gold would be found in pockets near Navajo Mountain. Nobody found any so it must still be there.

Hite's crossing is the most easily accessible crossing on the Colorado proper, after the Grand and the Green have joined. The ill-fated Capt. Gunnison's, now called Green River, Hite's and one near the Virgin River, which I believe has now been submerged by Lake Meade and Boulder Dam. Lee's Ferry and the present bridge 7 miles south is not and has never been, by any stretch of the imagination, a natural crossing. From Blanding on the east or Hanksville on the west the last half of the road to Hite's is only trail, passable only with horses, so his Dandy Crossing is still only a ford.

The strip of country you want to visit is east of the Colorado yet both the points you mention and asked about horses are on the west of the River. Your logical base would be, Blanding, Bluff or Mexican Hat. I know plenty of places where you can get horses and maybe mules. But you will find the little desert bred horses they use there are almost as hardy as mules, and this brings me to one of your inferences.

DO NOT attempt to get into this country without a guide. Men have died within a hundred yards of water. The country is unsurveyed and practically unexplored. All our maps are based on the ones made by Almon Harris Thompson, under Major James Wesley Powell in 1875-79. They are based on his astronomical and time observations later verified by him with triangulation. But his points were so far apart the topography etc., is only guesswork. The geological survey point out that *these are the only maps we have today*.

Send to the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. for, "THE SAN JUAN COUNTRY" geological survey professional paper No. 188, by Herbert E. Gregory, price .60 cash or money order only. This is quite technical, but very complete and informative. Careful study of it will more than repay you.

The colossal ruggedness and incredible vastness of this country can only be realized from the air, as practically none of it can be covered with a car. If you would like to see how it looks from the air write the Acme Photo Co., 847 East 9 South, Salt Lake City and ask him for the prints of Professor Marsell's air pictures. Have him put his numbers on the prints and then the following descriptions will be clear to you. These are not professional pictures, they were taken through the glass windows of the plane by an amateur, but they do give you a graphic idea. The cost will be .10 a print plus postage.

No. 11 Directly over Bluff, Utah, looking north up Comb Wash which extends for 100 miles. Shows the Abajo Mountains. No. 12 Junction of the Grand and Green Rivers west of Moab, Utah. No. 13 Goosenecks of the San Juan, plane at 10,000 ft. altitude. No. 14 Goosenecks. Plane dived from 14,000, picture is looking straight down, note plateau with timber. No. 15 Plane just passing over Navajo Mountain. Henry Mountains more than 100 miles away can be seen in left background. No. 22 Blanding in foreground, Bears Ears Mountain, in background.

This spring I am going to be a member of a party on a trip into, and west of, the Henry Mountains. The head of the expedition is a famous lecturer and explorer. Among others, he now has assignments from the Explorers' Club of N. Y. City and the American Museum of Natural History. This started from a simple query such as yours but has developed into something really big and worthwhile.

Horses will cost you about $1.50 a day. Guides from $2.50 to $5.00 depending on the number in the party. Get in touch with Harry Goulding, his address is: care Goulding's post, via Kayenta, Arizona, and get him to find you an Indian guide. The Navajos are fine people, no better Indians to be found, and you will be able to rely on any that Goulding recommends.

I would suggest you get Gregory's book and give it careful study. You will have enough hardship on your trip without heading blindly into more than you can take.

I have tried to point out to you some of the things you may not have known or realized about this country. My business is not supplying guides, but please believe me, I know this country and what I am talking about, and I would never venture very far from a known trail or road without a guide.

You will not have a nice soft vacation, it will be hard work, sweat, warm stagnant drinking water, dust choking you all the time, getting into your food and not nice soft dust but gritty, stinging sandy particles. Horses who will need an expert wrangler to keep them from leaving you at night and all that. But the trip should prove one of the highlights of your life.

KNOCKING over the hurdles.

Request:—I'd like to have a question settled which has been on my mind for about a year. How many hurdles are you permitted to kick over or knock down in running the 120 high hurdles?

I ran that event last year and my opponent knocked down six of them and as there were only ten my coach thought he should be disqualified, but the opposing coach said he was permitted to knock them all down if he wished. My opponent received the first place points and I think he deserved them, but I'd like to know the rule on this.

—R. Odle, Knightstown, Ind.

Reply by Jackson Scholz:—There is no disqualifying limit to the number of hurdles a competitor may knock over in a race. He can knock them all over if he wants to, the theory being that a competitor does himself more harm than good by failing to clear a barrier.

The A.A.U. ruling merely stipulates that, "A competitor who runs around, or carries his leg or foot alongside any hurdle shall be disqualified."

FOR a cheap freighter trip to Panama.

Request:—I wish to make a trip into the Republic of Panama as cheaply as I possibly can.

Can you tell me what the passage fare would be by freighter? By regular passenger lines?

Thank you for your service.

—Harold Kent, So. Glens Falls, N. Y.

Reply by Mr. Robert S. Benjamin:—I believe that the cheapest passage to Panama is about $60. This is on the Kokusai Line, 1 Broadway, New York. These are fast Japanese motor ships carrying only 12 passengers and make the trip from New York in about 6 days. Another line, The Maersk Line, has a rate of about $65. Their address is 16 Broadway, care of the Isbrandtsen Moller Co. Another is the Barber Line, 17 Battery Place, with a rate also of about $65.

All the above are of the freighter—cargo boat type and carry about twelve passengers. The regular passenger ships (The Panama Pacific Line) charges about $80 or more minimum accommodation.

HIGHWAY to rough road to burro for a Mexican hunting trip.

Request:—My sister and I plan to go on a hunting and pleasure trip into the state of Coahuila, somewhere in the vicinity of Boquillas, Texas. We wish to inquire about Mexican regulations, cost of permits, where obtained, and best way to travel in that locality.

I will list the questions that I am most interested in having you discuss:

1. Give me the data as to hunting regulations, permits, hunting seasons (if any), and any other "red tape" that my trip may entail.
2. When is the best season of the year to take a hunting trip to this region?
3. What game such as we call "big game" is to be found in the locality mentioned?
4. What is the best way, especially as to costs, to travel this territory? At present, we plan to hike, carrying camping equipment, or hire horses. Please discuss the hiring of horses, as to costs, availability, and tell me if we could forage the animals on the country or would we have to carry rations for them.
5. Will we be required to hire guides, or professional hunters? It is our desire to just go into the country and wander around as we wish, unhampered by regulations. Can we do this?
6. How about such a trip from a safety standpoint, as pertains to the natives? I ask this because of my sister.
7. Could we drive to Boquillas, Texas, and leave the car there and proceed from that point by foot or horses as desired?
8. Please describe that locality as to rainfall (for camp water), terrain, vegetation (if it is arid country or watered enough to have forests), and any other data you may think pertinent.

I wish to thank you for the courtesy you have accorded me in the past and to advance my thanks for any help you can now give me. Please feel free to discuss this trip both pro and con. If you have any suggestions as to a better locality in which to hunt I earnestly solicit your advice. We chose this place as being about as remote from civilization as can be found along the Rio Grande.

—Charles H. Lewis, Denver, Colo.

Reply by Mr. John W. Whiteaker:—Permits to take firearms into Mexico for hunting purposes must be obtained. From one to four guns of different calibre can be included in one permit—also fifty rounds of ammunition for each gun. Six passport size front-view photos of applicant are required. .45 calibre automatic pistols and 7m/m Mausers are not permitted under any circumstances. Before crossing the border all firearms should be registered at the U. S. Customs and an Export Declaration filed. This will prevent trouble in returning with your guns to the U. S. The permit will cost $5.00, U. S. currency.

At the Port of Entry you can obtain a copy of the hunting laws and the open season on various game animals. The hunting laws are not in general but locality has a great deal to do with the issuing of hunting license. The costs of hunting licenses vary in different parts of the country—one day $1.50; a week $3.50 or $15.00 per year.

Winter months are the best time of the year to visit in Mexico. This is the dry season of the year. All the vegetation and flowers, are at their best as are also the game animals.

Usually the rainy season in this section is from June to the latter part of October.

You have selected a rather wild part of the country in which to travel. Boquillas, Texas, is across the Rio Grande from Boquillas, Mexico. This little village is near the southeastern border of the Big Bend State Park which is the largest of the State Parks. The scenery is of the best in the mountainous country. All kinds of wild animal life can be seen in this section. On the Mexico side of the river, deer, wolves or more often coyotes, bear in the mountains, wild cats, wild hogs or peccaries, puma or leopard cats, mountain lions, panthers, and a number of smaller animals.

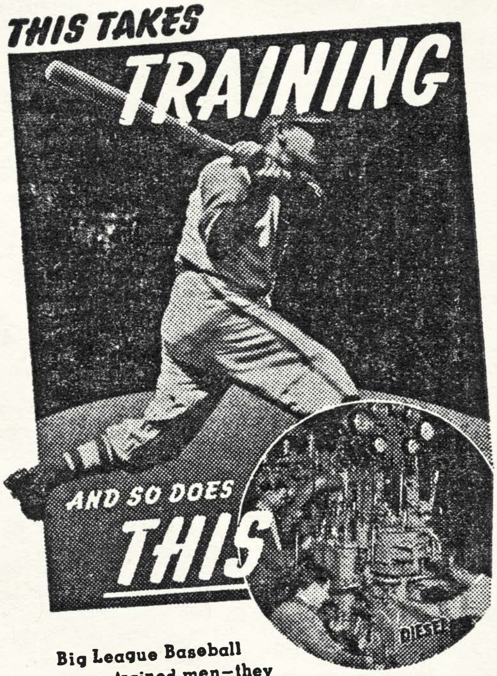
The most economical way to travel in this region is by burro. The burro is a hardy animal and requires very little attention. Can live on the country eating the scanty grass tree leaves, cacti, etc. Burros can be bought for a few dollars—from $2 to $5 owing to the training.

You will not need guides if you are just looking the country over and have no reservation on the hunting preserves along the river where guides are supplied—they cost about $5 per day with meals—not worth 25c.

It is as safe in Mexico as it is in this country—the country is well policed and justice is swift for ill doers. Ladies are not molested over there. You will have a good road—State Highway paved to Marathon—from Marathon to Cooper's Store about 43 miles on a rough highway—the road from here to Hot Springs and Boquillas is country road. Make inquiries at the Store about the road condition. Rough country, about 10 inches rain per year, mesquite, greasewood, cacti, etc. Streams and springs in some of the valleys but carry water with you to be safe.

HOW the Polynesian canoes roamed the Pacific with charts of sticks and shells.

Request:—Recently I came across mention of the stick and string marine charts which the early Polynesians used in navigation of the Pacific. Can you tell me anything about them? A ship's doctor whom I interviewed once told me of his hobby of tracing South Sea Island and Trans-Pacific navigation and travel in prehistoric times. He stated that in his opinion the Polynesians crossed India, took to the sea somewhere down on the Malay Peninsula, learned to journey to unknown islands by following bird flights, and, eventually developed an oceanic system of navigation for which a well organized naval or marine college provided directions, the charts, and data for the charts. A curious bit of information which I have not verified, and which may not be true, is that the Polynesians did not go to Australia because the birds



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30x4.50-21	2.40	1.15
28x4.75-19	2.45	1.25
29x4.75-20	2.50	1.25
29x5.00-19	2.85	1.25
30x5.00-20	2.85	1.25
5.25-17	2.90	1.35
28x5.25-18	2.90	1.35
29x5.25-19	2.95	1.35
30x5.25-20	2.95	1.35
31x5.25-21	3.25	1.35
5.50-17	3.35	1.40
28x5.50-18	3.35	1.40
29x5.50-19	3.35	1.45
6.00-17	3.40	1.40
30x6.00-18	3.40	1.40
31x6.00-19	3.40	1.45
32x6.00-20	3.45	1.55
33x6.00-21	3.65	1.55
32x6.50-20	3.75	1.75
6.00-16	3.75	1.45

REGULAR CORD TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes	Size	Tires	Tubes
30x3½	$2.35	$0.95	33x4½	$3.45	$1.45
31x4	2.95	1.25	34x4½	3.45	1.45
32x4	2.95	1.25	30x5	3.65	1.65
33x4	2.95	1.25	33x5	3.75	1.75
34x4	3.25	1.35	35x5	3.95	1.75
32x4½	3.35	1.45			

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Size	Tires	Tubes	Size	Tires	Tubes
30x5	$4.25	$1.95	34x7	$10.95	$4.65
33x5	3.95	1.75	38x7	10.95	4.65
34x5	4.25	2.25	36x8	11.45	4.95
32x6	7.95	2.95	40x8	13.25	4.95
36x6	9.95	4.45			

TRUCK BALLOON TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes	Size	Tires	Tubes
6.00-20	$3.75	$1.65	7.50-20	$6.95	$3.75
6.50-20	4.45	1.95	8.25-20	8.95	4.95
7.00-20	5.95	2.95	9.00-20	10.95	5.65
			9.75-20	13.95	6.45

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along the coasts of the islands north of Australia fly east, (and, I suppose, west), but never south.

He declared he had seen evidence in museums and other places of extension of Polynesian navigation to the Pacific Coast, and said he had seen a stone carving of an elephant dug up on one of the Santa Barbara Islands which, he believed, was a relic of the days when the Polynesians were en route through India.

What stirred my own interest in this latter datum was the finding in Washington state of a stone club closely resembling a type of war club which he said was a peculiarly Polynesian weapon. It is a spatulate club with double edges about fifteen inches long, or thereabouts. The oddity of his information was that the club was not used, as one might suppose, to cut with the edges in striking, but to brain by a thrust with the point to a spot on the skull of the foe that would burst the sutures and thus crack open the enemy's head. The club, he said, was highly prized and was buried with a warrior, but was available to a grandson (never a son) who proved worthy to wield it.

I have two of the Pacific Coast forms of such a club (though, of course, not necessarily of any Polynesian inspiration or similarity of use) and in consequence grew quite interested in the doctor's theories, and all "hot" to obtain one of the Polynesian clubs. I've since obtained a carved whalebone (I presume) version of the club from the Aleutian Islands; and I was interested to find a reference by Tyler observing the resemblance of the island clubs to some found in the Americas. He cited a jade specimen found in Peru.

The whole thing is another of those fascinating theories about what went on the other side of the curtain of the past, of course. But the charts and the huge canoes that were in effect ships, give plausibility to ideas of organized Trans-Pacific travel before the white man's era.

—Charles Miles, Oakland, Calif.

Reply by Mr. William McCreadie:—Actually these charts were "sea instructions" for the navigators of each group of islands. They were essentially the product of the Marshall group, each centre having its own stick chart. I had the privilege to inspect two of these through the courtesy of the Ethnological section of the Sydney Museum. They are frames of thin split bamboo about one-quarter of an inch wide, tied with string. Each island is shown by a small shell tied in place. Winds and currents are indicated by bends around the islands. These instructional charts were personal and if found in Fiji by early voyagers must have been loaned or taken from the Marshalls. The charts I saw measured about three feet square and were very flimsy affairs requiring careful handling. They were very ingenious and showed some scientific skill, rudimentary but definite.

You will find some interesting notes on them in "Canoes of Oceania" published by B. P. Bishop Museum of Honolulu. The Geographical Journal has illustrations of them.

Referring to the small stone clubs you mention, it is likely that they were used by the Maoris of New Zealand, who were Polynesians, as you know.

MAKING a water telescope for seeing into the depths.

Request:—I'd like to get some information on making a water glass to be used from a boat to look down to the bottom of the water.

Can you tell me how to make one?

—Joseph Moore, Auburn, N. Y.

Reply by Mr. Raymond S. Spears:—A waterglass, used by shellers and pearl fishermen, trappers and others who want to look at the bottom of clear waters, is usually a square or round tube five to seven or eight inches square (or in circumference) and from eighteen inches long to perhaps thirty inches long.

Down on the St. Francis river I saw one made out of a length of stovepipe. One end had been crimped by a tinsmith around a piece of plate glass, and the glass cemented in, to make it waterproof. The stove pipe had been heavily enameled, inside and out, so it wouldn't rust. Any glazier could cut the glass and any tinsmith fasten it in the stovepipe, and waterproof it.

Another waterglass was made out of planed (both sides) boards, twenty-six inches long, and nailed to make a box, open at both ends. Before nailing, slots were cut for a snug fit for a square of plate glass at one end. The glass was caulked in to make it water tight, and the boards were all painted, inside and out. To keep the light out, the sheller had tacked pieces of dark cloth around the open end of the "telescope" like a hood over a camera, so it would come up over his head, while he used it.

Both these waterglasses or "water telescopes" were used by the men while lying on a board in the stern of their skiffs looking into the water as the boat drifted.

Some of the shantyboaters make waterglasses of ordinary window glass, but plate glass is stronger and better.

The chief problem is to fit the glass into the end of the tube, half an inch or an inch up, so it will be watertight.

THIS reader dug up a rare "plug bayonet," used about 1700.

Request:—I have been told that you are an authority on antique knives and swords. Could you write me some information on this weapon? It was found in the Lehigh Mountains at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and since it was packed in clay, has not rusted away. The length of the knife is sixteen inches, it has a guard which fits over the end of the blade, behind this guard is an iron ring, and then a ball of ivory, and then a further extension of the knife blade which looks as if a handle might have rotted away from it, leaving no trace. I enclose a picture of it. It is an interesting piece, and I'd be thankful for any information you could give me.

—C. F. Michael, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Reply by Captain R. E. Gardner:—You have presented one of the most interesting weapons which has come to my attention. Not only because the piece itself is interesting but the fact that it was a "Ground Find" from near Bethlehem, Pa., is of interest also.

You possess one of the first "bayonet à manche" or plug bayonets. The old die-hards were not content to entirely forego their pole arms upon the general adoption of the musket so this bayonet was designed to fit into the muzzle of the musket after its discharge to form a sort of pike. The plug bayonet was introduced into France in 1671 and into the British service the following year. It is obvious that efforts would be shortly made to discover some means of fixing it firmly to the muzzle without obstructing the action of the musket itself. This was accordingly accomplished with the development of the ringed bayonet which was introduced on the continent about 1678 and by Macay in Scotland in 1689. The final development in means of attachment—the socket bayonet—was developed at the commencement of the 18th century. Sebastian Vauban (1633-1707) secured its complete adoption by the infantry of France in 1703.

Your bayonet was probably fabricated for use by a crack unit of royal troops. The armourer's mark is unmistakably Spanish. The plug bayonet was in general use for only about a quarter-century, 1671-1703. Now how would one such weapon become buried near Bethlehem?

HOW many ships are there on the sea—how much tonnage subject to sinking?

Request:—Could you give me information on the merchant marine of the world powers? I'd like to know how many ships each country had in use before the war, and total tonnage. Are there any magazines published about the merchant marine? Can you give me the titles of some technical books on the subject?

—H. Pfister, Newark, N. J.

Reply by Mr. Gordon MacAllister:—As you do not specify which War, I assume you mean the present conflict. On July 1st, 1938 the United States had 11,403,895 gross tons; France, 2,280,783; Great Britain, 20,701,090; Germany, 4,231,657; Japan, 5,006,712; Norway, 4,613,175; Holland, 2,852,012; Italy, 3,258,992; and Belgium, 430,624.

I am sorry that I cannot give you the number of ships each country possesses. I suggest you get hold of a copy of Lloyd's Register of Shipping.

The following is a list of the names and addresses of a few of the leading marine journals. Most of them are monthlies. I can't recall any weekly, except the PILOT, a newspaper put out by the National Maritime Union, address: 126 Eleventh Avenue, New York City.

Marine Age, 75 West Street, N. Y. C.

Marine Engineering & Shipping Review, 80 Church St., N. Y. C.

Marine Journal, 5 Beekman St., N. Y. C.

Marine News, 26 Water St., N. Y. C.

Marine Progress, 95 Broad St., N. Y. C.

Nautical Gazette, 20 Vesey St., N. Y. C.

As for books, especially technical, I should suggest writing to the Cornell Book Shop, 350 West 23rd Street, N. Y. C. They deal largely in books pertaining to the Merchant Marine. Personally, I recommend Capt. Felix Reisenberg's *Men on Deck*, and *Seamanship;* also Healey's *Foc's'tle and Gloryhole* (the best book on the Merchant Marine I've seen in a long time) and *The American Merchant Seaman's Manual* edited by Felix Cornell and Capt. Hoffman. The above-mentioned bookshop has them all.

FOOTGEAR for Florida tramping—feet versus snakes.

Request:—What kind of footgear would you advise for extensive tramping in hot country—Florida, for instance? I am planning a camping and hiking trip and so I'd appreciate any advice you can give me.

—D. J. Powers, St. Ignace, Mich.

Reply by Dr. C. P. Fordyce:—I have spent a lot of time in the Florida wilderness.

I carry a canteen for trail needs. When in camp I boil my water and cool it in a gallon desert bag and from it I fill the canteen.

While I usually recommend an ankle high shoe for hiking I do recommend a knee high boot in Florida for protection against snakes. You cannot walk in grass without a stick ahead of you to rout snakes. Your tent should have a sewed-in floor cloth and netting front. You should also have a snake kit with you. The one made by Becton Dickinson, Rutherford, N. J., is O. K. Most druggists will stock it. Also have a can of mosquito dope with you. A good formula is: Oil citronella, 1 oz.; Spirits of camphor, 1 oz.; Oil of cedar, ½ oz.

A good glaze type dope is Nessmuks old formula: Pure pine tar, 1 oz., or oil of tar; Oil pennyroyal, 1 oz.; Castor oil, 3 oz.

Simmer the tar and castor oil for a half hour then add the pennyroyal.

SWING music and what in blazes is it?

Request:—Could you please send me information on "swing music"? This does not come under the heading of Old Songs but I hope you can help me out. I am interested in the origin of swing, and any articles you know of, I'll be glad to look up.

—J. A. Martin, Wollaston, Mass.

Reply by Mr. Robert White:—Most of the material written on or about "Swing Music" to date is in the form of magazine articles in such magazines as Metronome, Tempo, Up Beat, Down Beat.

A letter of inquiry to these magazines, will bring you a list of the issues containing articles on this subject. Your library undoubtedly has a file of these magazines.

Down Beat's Yearbook of Swing by Paul Edward Henderson issued in 1939 should prove a worthwhile addition to your library.

Down Beat Publishing Company, 608 South Dearborn Street, Chicago.

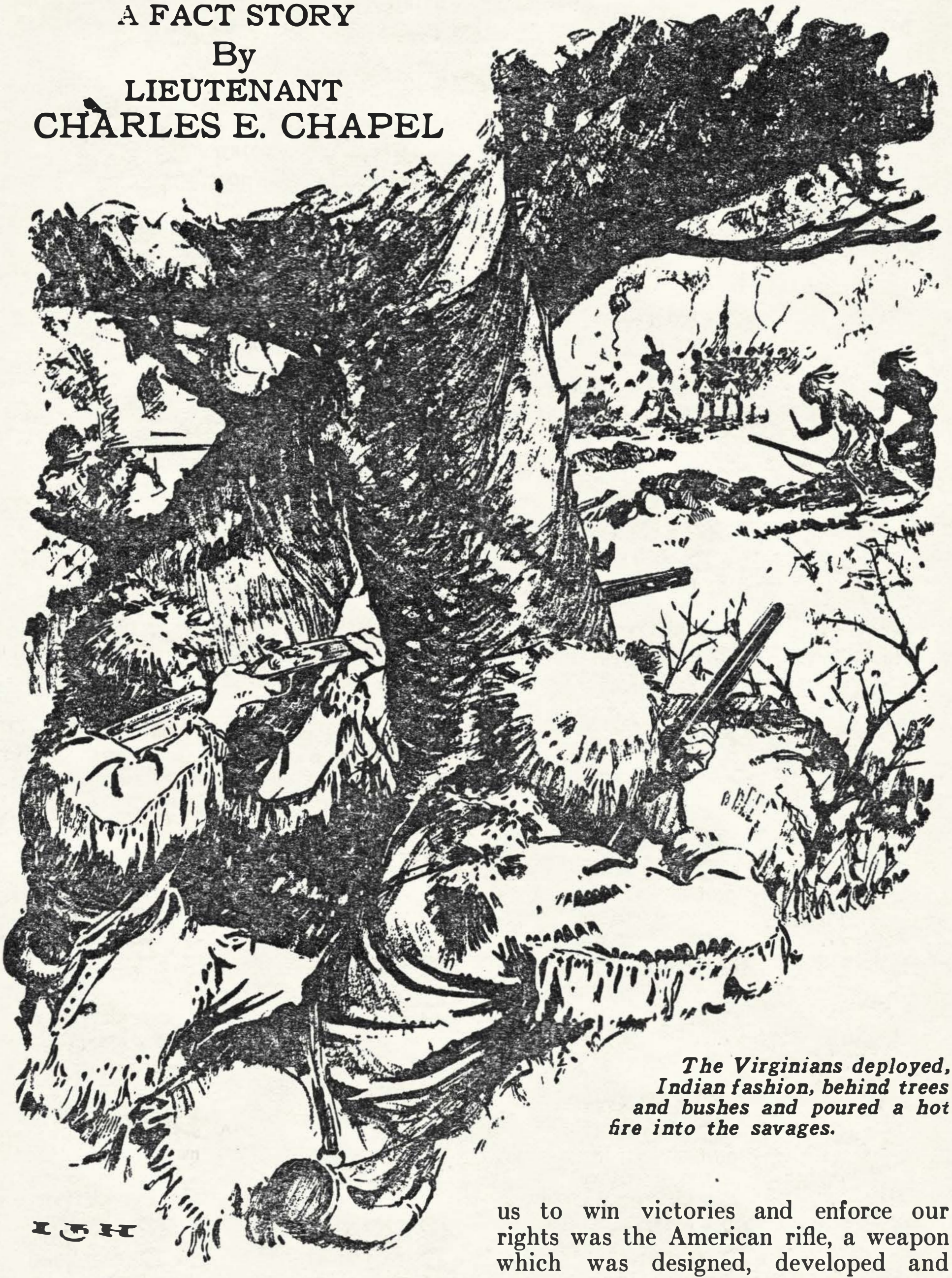
"Swing That Music" by Louis Armstrong,—published by Longmans, Green and Company—114 Fifth Avenue, New York City, came out in 1936.

I don't know just how much of a note book you intend to compile. For all ordinary purposes the two above books should be sufficient.

GUNS OF GLORY

A FACT STORY

By
LIEUTENANT
CHARLES E. CHAPEL



The Virginians deployed, Indian fashion, behind trees and bushes and poured a hot fire into the savages.

AMERICA was won with the rifle. We were made and preserved a nation by the brave men, living and dead, who fought for liberty from Concord to the Argonne. Bravery alone was not enough. The gun that enabled us to win victories and enforce our rights was the American rifle, a weapon which was designed, developed and manufactured by Yankee genius. To those who know little and care less about our colorful and romantic past, the rifles of America are mere pieces of wood and iron, but to those who look for the story of the men behind the weapons, they are the precious symbols of our national existence; they are the guns of glory!

The first American shoulder weapons were not rifles; they were smooth-bores, usually called muskets, but they deserve a place in the story of American heroes and their arms, for those old muskets were the ancestors of the rifles carried by our soldiers, sailors and marines today, and the men who carried them had a lot to do with the adoption of the rifles that followed the smoothbores.

When Miles Standish, back in Pilgrim days, mustered a company of volunteers for a battle with the Indians, his men carried a strange assortment of firearms. He himself had a wheel-lock, a gun with a steel wheel that revolved against a piece of flint to produce sparks and light the powder to fire the gun. A few of his soldiers owned "snaphances"—flint-lock muskets which were just as effective as a wheel-lock but cheaper and simpler to operate—but the majority of his followers were too poor to own their own guns and had to draw them from the community storehouse.

The musket issued to the average citizen was a "match-lock," so called because there was no flint-and-steel device for setting fire to the powder charge; instead, there was a piece of slender rope, soaked in nitre, to make it burn easily.

When the trigger was pulled, the burning end of the rope dropped into a pan at the rear of the barrel, where it set fire to the fine priming powder held in the pan. Opposite the pan there was a hole in the barrel. The fire in the pan passed through this hole and set off the main charge of powder, thus discharging the bullet, which was a round lead ball more than three-quarters of an inch in diameter.

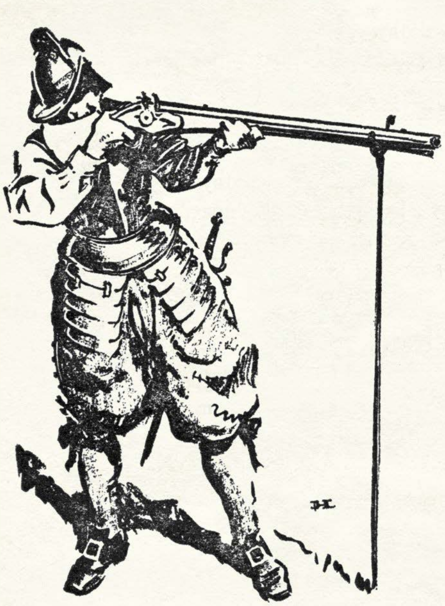
When Miles Standish led his men in expeditions against the hostile Indians, there was much grumbling by those armed with the match-lock. The slightest bit of rain extinguished the burning match; its fire and smoke betrayed the presence of the white soldiers to the Indians and brought a shower of arrows. The only merits of this primitive weapon were its simplicity and cheapness of construction, for it was hardly more than an iron pipe mounted on a rough block of wood.

The snaphance carried by the few who could afford to own their own arms had a barrel and stock which were no better than those on the match-locks, but its firing mechanism gave the soldier much less trouble. There was a piece of flint held in the hammer by a clamp; when the trigger was pulled the flint flew forward and struck against a steel plate to make sparks for lighting the powder. This was a more certain method of firing than having to depend on a burning match in all kinds of weather, but even then the soldier was never sure that his gun would work, for the wind might blow the priming powder out of the pan, or a rain might dampen it just when he needed it most.

To make matters worse, none of these early guns were accurate, and even in the hands of experienced men they were less effective than the bows and arrows of the Indians. The only thing that saved our ancestors was the fright struck into the hearts of the savages when they heard a roar like thunder, and saw fire and smoke belch forth from the guns of the Pilgrims.

YEARS passed swiftly as the colonists pushed back the wilderness and brought the Indians to terms of peace, but as the English settlements spread out, they came into violent conflict with the French, who claimed vast stretches of land by reason of exploration and conquest. To back up her claims, England sent regiments of her regular army to America, armed with the famous Brown Bess flint-lock musket.

Like the crude snaphance of Miles Standish's volunteers, the Brown Bess of the British regulars was a smoothbore muzzle-loader and it was scarcely more accurate than the guns it displaced. The only improvement was in the pan. Instead of leaving the fine priming powder exposed to the wind and the rain, the steel plate against which the flint struck to make sparks was now bent so that it covered the pan until



1620

the trigger was pulled; when that happened the flint not only made sparks as it hit the steel plate, but it also knocked the plate out of the way to expose the priming powder to the fire.

Veterans of the Pilgrim days, and their sons, who were now old enough to serve as soldiers, usually accompanied the British regulars on their expeditions against the French and the Indian allies of the French, but the Americans always tried to obtain detached duty where they could use their own methods of fighting.

The reason for this, of course, was that the British were trained to fire a volley from solid ranks lined up in a straight, close-order parade-ground formation. This method looked well, and it showed their bravery, but it was ill suited to campaigning against Indians, who took advantage of every bit of natural cover by firing from fallen logs, from behind trees, and from bushes, where they could pick off the white soldiers with little chance of being hit themselves.

George Washington, then a young lieutenant-colonel of a Virginia militia regiment, tried to explain this to General Braddock when they set out on one

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of their expeditions against the French and Indians. Braddock disregarded Washington's advice and marched his men into an ambush that has come down to us in history under the name of "Braddock's Defeat."

Nine hundred of the British regulars were killed by the Indians, and the only reason that the remaining four hundred escaped was that the Virginia riflemen deployed, Indian fashion, behind trees and bushes and poured such a hot fire into the savages that they were unable to complete their attempted massacre.

Again, at the siege of Quebec, the British General Wolfe placed Pennsylvania Provincial riflemen in the front of his army to act as shock troops in clearing the way for the advance of his regulars to the Plains of Abraham. The Pennsylvania volunteers withstood the fire of the French soldiers, and did their work so well that the main body of the British were able to close with the enemy in a bayonet charge.

At the crucial moment of the engagement, a staff officer reported to General Wolfe and excitedly shouted: "They run, sir, they run!" Wolfe, who was back with the main body, asked, "Who runs?" The aide replied, "The French, sir." At that minute, the power of France in America was broken, and the American riflemen gained a confidence in themselves that was but the first chapter in that unfinished story of winning and saving our freedom with the rifle.

It must be remembered that at that time both the French and the British were armed with smooth-bores. The weapons carried by the American colonial troops included both smooth-bores and rifles, but the volunteers who came from the newer settlements on the frontier were principally armed with the rifle. Commonly called "The Kentucky Rifle," this weapon is more properly termed "The Pennsylvania Rifle", because it was developed and manufactured in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Its wide use in our colonial campaigns, the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and even the Civil War, entitle it to the distinction of being called "The American Rifle."

The name "Kentucky" was given to

that vast region of wilderness west of the Cumberland River by Daniel Boone and his friends who led land-hungry men and women to the West. Since the favorite weapon of these pioneers was the rifle and not the smooth-bore musket, the term "Kentucky" was applied to the firearm, but it should be remembered that this word has nothing to do with the present State of Kentucky, which was not in existence until long years after the days of Daniel Boone.

SWISS and German gunsmiths who set up shop in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania about 1725 sold the settlers rifles that they made after the pattern of weapons carried in Central Europe by men known as "Jaegers" or "Chasseurs," but the American backwoodsmen found that the European model was too clumsy and inaccurate for his needs.

For this reason they insisted on a number of improvements, the most important of which were the reduction of the caliber from about three-fourths of an inch to less than one-half inch, and an increase in the barrel length from about 31 to 42 inches or more.

These changes were the logical outcome of backwoods hunting conditions. If a man were gone on a hunting trip lasting a week or more, traveling hundreds of miles in search of game to feed his family, the difference of a few pounds in the weight of the lead he carried was important. By cutting down the caliber, and hence the diameter of the bullet, he reduced the amount of lead needed to make the same number of bullets as he had used before.

The short barrel of the European rifle had been satisfactory for the short ranges at which it was usually fired abroad, but in this country a longer barrel was needed for bringing down big game at considerable distances.

The two changes, in barrel length, and in the size of the bore, were important, but a distinctly Yankee invention was the loading method. The Swiss and Germans were accustomed to hammering the lead balls into place by striking the ramrod with a mallet, but this was a slow process, the shooter was exposed to enemy fire while he stood up to do this hammering, and it wore down the rifling.

Some unsung hero of America found that if he placed a greased patch of cloth or leather under the lead ball, he could ram down the ball faster and quicker and then fire with more accuracy than he could if he loaded according to the European process. It sounds simple today, but it was such an advance in those ways that it enabled American riflemen to repeatedly win victories against the flower of the British and French armies.

When the Revolution began against England, George Washington's first act was to send messengers to all the frontier settlements with a call for volunteers to fight the British. They answered his call by the thousands and came into camp wearing their Indian moccasins, buckskin hunting suits and coonskin hats, and carrying their long-barrelled Kentucky rifles. With these rifles they were able to act as snipers, picking off British officers and color-bearers at such great ranges that they could comfortably fire all day, safe from the return fire of the short-range British smooth-bore muskets.

If you ever chance to see a copy of the "Textbook of Small Arms," published to this day by the British War Office, you will find this sentence that tells a lot in a few words: "The settlers from the backwoods of America used their hunting rifles with so much effect that the only effective rejoinder was to pit rifle against rifle; for this purpose, Jaegers were recruited on the Continent."

These "Jaegers" were none other than the "Hessians" of our school histories. The old legend that King George III was unable to find Englishmen to fight against Americans is utter nonsense. The real reason he sent Hessians against us was that they were trained and equipped with rifles as contrasted with the British troops who were armed with smooth-bore muskets. Furthermore, the rifles that the Hessians owned were the same ones that had served as a model for the first Kentucky rifles made in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

To add still more to the reputation of the Hessians, they were experienced in hunting in the forests of Germany and understood how to take advantage of natural cover, although it must be admitted that their officers gave them little opportunity to do this and insisted on their doing their fighting standing up, in ranks, to please their British masters.

To the surprise of everyone who did not know the American pioneers, the Americans were able to snipe the Hessians just as they had the British, the only difference being that the Yankees had to be careful to keep fifty or a hundred yards farther back from the Hessians than they had from the British. The Hessians had been drafted; they had little heart in what they were doing, and long before their defeat at Trenton, they began to desert to the American side.

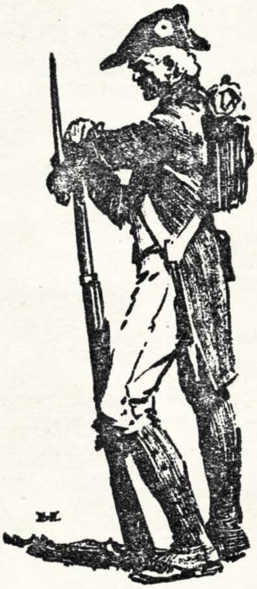
It must not be supposed that all Americans in the Revolution had rifles; quite the contrary, the bulk of the Continental Army were armed with smoothbores bought on contract by the Continental Congress from native gunsmiths, or imported from France when that country joined America in the war against England. A very few rifles were issued to our forces by the Congress, but most of the rifles were the private property of the individuals from the backwoods.

THE SCENE now shifts to the War of 1812. In the outstanding land battle of that conflict, fought at New Orleans in 1815, victory was won with the Kentucky Rifle. General Andrew Jackson, with four thousand men, beat off the attack of a far superior force of British veterans from Wellington's army in Spain that had defeated Napoleon Bonaparte's best troops.

Jackson had 300 unarmed Negroes, 600 of LaFitte's pirates armed with pistols and cutlasses, about 500 regulars armed with the regulation smooth-bore muskets, and more than 2,000 militia from the western frontier (the present states of Tennessee, Kentucky and Louisiana) who were armed with the Kentucky Rifle.

Jackson lost six men killed and seven wounded. The British lost more than 2,000 men, dead or seriously wounded. Most of the slaughter was accomplished by the militia with their rifles before the British advanced within range of the smooth-bores of the regulars. As the first important contest between men armed with the rifle and those with the smooth-bore, the Battle of New Orleans should have taught the nations of the world a valuable lesson, but twenty-five more years passed before either the United States or England adopted the rifle as the standard, regulation arm for soldiers.

BETWEEN the War of 1812 and the War with Mexico there were several campaigns against hostile Indians in which our soldiers continued to use the old smooth-bore flint-lock muskets. While these expeditions were going on, our backwoods hunters, ever on the alert for any improvement on their weapons, adopted the cap-and-ball lock for their Kentucky Rifles in place of the old flint-lock.



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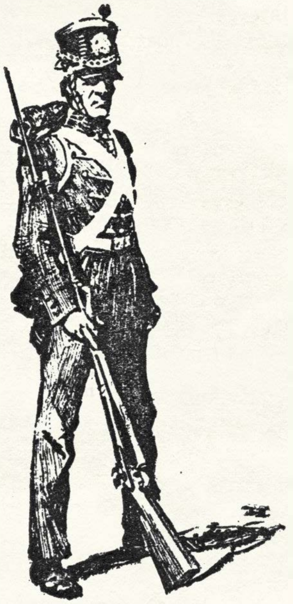

1814

This cap-and-ball lock, which is technically called a "percussion" lock, was invented in 1807 by a Presbyterian Minister named Alexander Forsyth, who lived in Scotland. Next to the discovery of gunpowder, this was the most important invention in the history of guns, for it laid a foundation for the development of the metallic cartridge, breech-loading, repeating arms, automatic fire, and most of the other improvements that we take for granted today.

The idea back of the percussion lock is simple. When a small amount of fulminate of mercury is struck with a sharp blow, it explodes and the explosion will set fire to gunpowder. Actually the fulminate was enclosed in little copper cups or "caps." The old flint-lock mechanism was removed from the gun and a steel tube, called a "nipple" was driven into the hole in the rear of the barrel which had originally carried the flame from the priming powder in the pan to the main charge of powder in the barrel.

The clumsy old jaws on the hammer of the flint-lock were removed and the hammer was altered to look more like it does on modern guns. When the hunt-

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er pulled the trigger, the steel hammer came down on the copper percussion cap which had been inserted in the tube-like nipple, exploded the cap, and fired the gun. That was all there was to it. There was no worry about the wind and the rain damaging powder in a pan, and there was very little chance of a misfire in comparison with the large number of failures obtained with the flintlock. Not only was the new method less "messy," it was quicker and easier, and the hunter could often gets in an extra shot that meant the difference between hunger and plenty in the little log cabin back home.

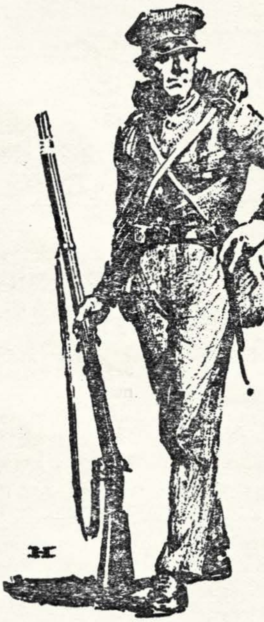
Slow as it had been before to adopt improvements, the United States Army saw the superiority of the backwoodsman's percussion rifle, and issued thousands of them to our troops in time to be used in the Mexican War, but even then a rifled barrel caused much head-shaking on the part of the older generals and to play safe they armed our men with both smooth-bores and rifles.

Obviously, the rifle was the more popular. Technically, it was called the U.S. Model 1842 Percussion Rifle, but because it was well liked it was given several nicknames. Since the first troops to carry it in the Mexican War came from Mississippi, it was called the "Mississippi Rifle." Its accuracy gave it the name "Yerger," a Yankee corruption of the German word "Jaeger." Years later, when this same rifle was used in the Civil War it was called the "Harper's Ferry Rifle" because many of them were made at the government arsenal at Harper's Ferry.

In the Mexican War, the superiority of the rifle over the smoothbore was shown again and again, for Americans armed with the rifle could kill the Mexicans before they could come close enough to hit any of our men, while United States soldiers unfortunate enough to be equipped with smoothbores were often the victims of the enemy fire. Gradually the War Department and Congress came to see the foolishness of sticking to obsolete guns that belonged in museums or on the junk heap, so in 1856 the manufacture of smoothbores was discontinued forever.

Both the backwoodsmen and the soldiers had discovered that they could fire cone-shaped bullets in the rifles, whereas only round balls could be fired in the smooth-bores. The reason, of course, was that the rifling in the bore gave the bullet a spin which kept it steady in its flight, whereas there was no such spin from a smooth-bore. Consequently, cone-shaped bullets came into use in the Mexican War and became quite common in the Civil War; this gave the soldier greater accuracy and enabled him to hit a target at a much greater distance than he could in round-ball days.

UNTIL the close of the Civil War, most of our shoulder arms were muzzle-loaders, but the first successful breech-loader was adopted by the Army as early as 1819. This was the invention of John H. Hall, who patented it way back in 1811. Strangely enough, it was made in our government arsenal at Harper's Ferry continuously from 1825 to 1840, and it was carried by our soldiers in the Black Hawk, Seminole, Mexican and Civil Wars, but true to its conservative policy, our War Department continued to favor the muzzle-loader as the principal arm of the infantry.



Mexican War

The Hall Breech-loader was not the only one of its kind, by any means. The U.S. Navy had a Jenks Navy Rifle as early as 1838; improved by a man named Merrill, it became known as the "Jenks-Merrill" and was carried aboard Union vessels during the Civil War. However, the most famous single-shot percussion breech-loader in our history was the Sharps Military Rifle.

Some folks think that the word "sharpshooter" comes from the fact that the Sharps Rifle was carried by Colonel Berdan's regiment of sharpshooters in the Army of the Potomac during the Civil War, but this is not true, since the word "sharpshooter" was used long before Sharps made his first rifle.

Lest we be accused of taking some of the romance out of the story of our guns, it should be observed that the fame of the Sharps rests on a much firmer basis, for it was the short-barrelled Sharps Carbine that was taken from John Brown when he raided Harper's Ferry in 1859, and it was the Sharps Carbine that was sent by the Reverend Henry Ward Beecher into Kansas to arm the anti-slavery people in their undeclared war against the slavery faction. From this incident the Sharps Rifle became known as a "Beecher's Bible."

Most of us have heard veterans of the Civil War tell about the bullets that came wrapped up in paper with the powder. They had to tear the paper with their teeth, dump the powder and ball down the muzzle, ram home the charge and then fired. In carrying out this loading process they became black in the face from the powder, and during the excitement of battle they sometimes loaded one charge on top of another without actually firing a single shot. This is hard to believe, but those of us who have been in a military engagement know that strange things happen when bullets are whistling around one's head.

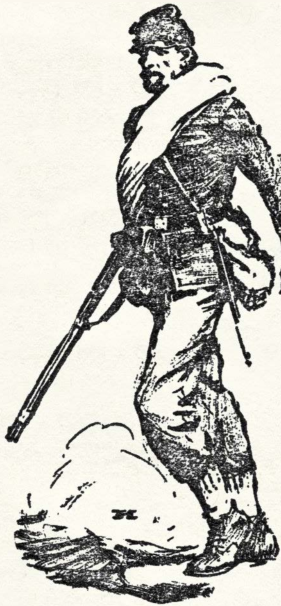
After the Battle of Gettysburg, which was fought on the first three days of

July, 1863, ordnance men picked up from the battlefield 37,574 arms which they sent to the arsenal at Washington, D. C. One fourth of them were loaded with only one charge, but fully one-half had two loads, and the remaining 6,000 arms had from three to ten loads in each gun! The War Department records show that one musket was found with twenty-three charges of ball and powder, loaded, one on top of another in the bore.

Some of the muskets were found loaded with cartridges upside down and many were loaded without tearing the paper to expose the powder. From this evidence of the excitement prevailing during the battle, it has been estimated that one-third of all the soldiers on each side were ineffective as fighting men and were nothing better than cannon fodder. The military authorities of that day decided then and there that the breech-loader must be adopted as soon as the War ended. Thereafter, the soldier would have to fire one round before he could load another, and he would therefore be less likely to offer himself as a useless sacrifice.

DURING all these years there was a constant search for some method to make the gun into a repeater so that it would fire one shot after another without stopping to reload. Samuel Colt, the inventor of the Colt revolver, made repeating rifles and carbines (short barrelled rifles) for our Army, but the Colt Rifle was hated by the men who shot it. There was a big noise and a loud flash close to the face; sometimes several chambers went off at the same time and did the soldier more harm than the enemy.

Disregarding the Colt, which was a failure, the two outstanding repeaters of the Civil War were the Henry and the Spencer. The Henry used rim-fire cartridges—that is, the fulminate or "cap"-material was built into the rim of the cartridges instead of being loaded separately. More than ten thousand men in the Union Army were armed with this repeater, and it is important as being the model from which the present Winchester was developed. As a repeater, it was so successful that the Confederates described it as "that damned Yankee rifle that can be loaded Sunday and fired all week."



Civil War

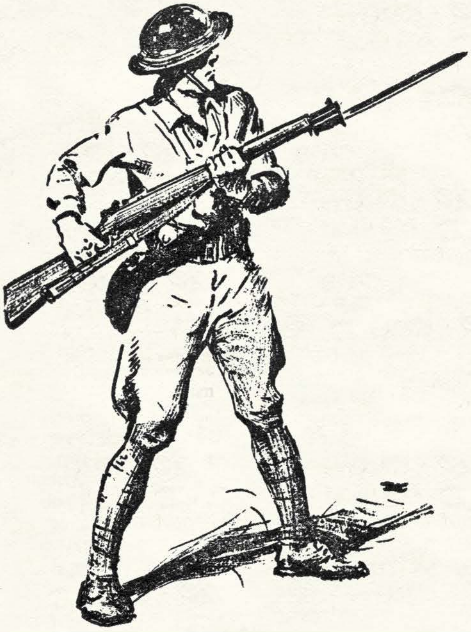
Our soldiers liked the repeaters because it often meant the difference between life and death to be able to fire one or two extra shots in the time ordinarily taken to reload one of the old single-shooters. Second only to the Henry in popularity was the Spencer. It was carried by the Michigan Cavalry Brigade in the Battle of Gettysburg, and in the West by Wilder's Lightning Brigade. After the War, it was used by Custer's famous Seventh Cavalry at the Battle of Washita in his campaign against the Indians.

It might well be asked why the War Department was so slow about adopting these improvements, especially when we remember that breech-loaders and repeaters were in existence and being successfuly used alongside of single-shot, muzzle-loading flint-locks. The answer is that the Army recognized the value of each progress in design, but waited for experimental trials before ordering the improvements in quantity.

Furthermore, the fault did not lie entirely with the War Department. Congress has always been hesitant about giving the Army up-to-date equipment in times of peace, for there are few votes to be gained back home by such legislation. When a war comes, the people demand "the best there is for our boys," but then it is too late—there is neither machinery nor time for a wholesale change in the gun factories. The natural result has been that in every war in which America has fought we have sent men into action equipped with arms which were already obsolete.

In the same old slow-poke fashion, the United States continued to use old junk for weapons until 1892, when the Krag-Jorgensen became our regulation rifle, taking the place of our regulation Springfield single-shot. This was a breech-loading repeater; the first lot were issued to our men in 1894, and then production speeded up so that we were able to arm our troops with this rifle for the Spanish-American War of 1898 and the Filipino Insurrection which followed.

At the same time, the Navy adopted the Lee Straight-Pull Rifle, which it carried in the Spanish War; this rifle is im-



1940

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portant because it was the first United States Rifle loaded with clips of cartridges instead of single loads. Incidentally, it was also the smallest caliber military rifle ever adopted anywhere in the world, for it was only caliber .23. The Navy soon saw its mistake, not because of the size of the caliber or the use of the clips, but because the Lee was poorly designed for military purposes. After a short trial, the Navy changed over to the Krag, and ever since the Army and Navy have always used the same rifles.

In fighting the Spaniards, our soldiers were surprised to find that the enemy were armed with a rifle superior to our own,—a Mauser of German invention. The Americans were better shots and made up for the difference in the quality of their arms by their own efforts, but occasionally, when some Spanish sniper got into action, we found that he could pick off our officers at a distance beyond the effective range of our Krags.

AFTER the Spanish American War, the United States paid the German owners of the patent rights to the Mauser the sum of $200,000 for permission to copy its essential features into a weapon that became known as the United States Rifle, Model of 1903, commonly called "The Springfield."

There are few who know of the German origin of this Springfield Rifle that is still carried today by our Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, and the few that know about it are hesitant to mention its foreign origin, but there is no real reason for hiding it. Just as the first American (or Kentucky or Pennsylvania) Rifle was modelled after a German rifle, but improved according to Yankee ideas, so the Mauser was modified by Americans until it no longer bore any resemblance to its ancestor of forty years ago.

In a like manner, our soldiers fired the Springfield Rifle in the World War against the Germans so effectively that they were able to turn the tide of victory just as our ancestors from the backwoods defeated the Hessians in the

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Revolution, and thus demonstrated that the New World could produce not only better gunsmiths but also better marksmen than the Old World.

This Springfield, which is still in use, can be loaded normally with a clip of five cartridges. A sixth can be added if necessary but it takes time to work the bolt in loading and unloading, so our War Department has approved a new rifle, called the "U. S. Rifle, Caliber .30 M-1" in official language, but described as the "Garand Semi-Automatic Rifle" by our armed forces.

It is called "semi-automatic" because it is impossible to fire more than one shot with each squeeze of the trigger; at the same time, it is possible to load a clip of eight .30 caliber cartridges (the same as those now used in the Springfield) and to fire them five times as fast as we can the present Springfield.

The new Garand is not only a faster-firing rifle, but it has less "kick" than the Springfield. This is an important feature, for the smaller recoil makes it easier to train new men and enables the experienced shooters to maintain a more accurate fire over a longer period of time. As funds and manufacturing equipment become available, the Garand will be issued to the armed services until it is eventually in the hands of every man. May the Garand, like its predecessors among the guns of glory, follow the Stars and Stripes to victory!

Author's note: These assertions are the private opinions of the author, and are not to be construed as official, or reflecting the views of the War and Navy Departments, or the naval-military service at large.

LOST TRAILS

(Continued from page 4)

Bob Wales (Robert) worked with me at Carytham Farm in 1937 in the Dairy at Bridgehampton, L. I. (Red) K. J. Craft, 26 Broadway, Socony Vacuum Oil Co., N.Y.C., c/o S. S. Java Arrow. Where is he now?

Anxious to hear from old shipmates that have served aboard the U.S.S. ROCHESTER, U.S.S. SCORPION, U.S.S. DENEBOLA, U.S.S. DOBBIN, ships of the Destroyer Divisions, and those who have seen service with the old U.S. Naval Detachment in European and Turkish waters. C. S. Williams, ex-Yeoman 2c, U.S.N., 240 Atlantic Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Would like to hear from any descendants of John and Margaret Moore who left Tennesee about time of Civil War. Margaret was a Campbell before her marriage. She had three brothers, Philip, Alexander (called Sandy) and Daniel (called Short). J. T. Campbell, R. 2, Box 708, El Cajon, Calif.

De Witt L. Greene, born January 25th, 1888, in Illinois, son of W. J. Greene. Trying for 20 years to locate you. Write your sister, Georgia. Mrs. H. A. Wilson, R. 1, Box 68, Corcoran, Calfiornia.

James P. Dale, 5 ft. 11, red hair, heard from in Los Angeles and Milwaukee in 1937—word wanted by his mother, Nyla Scott De Marcus, c/o Box 522, Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Charles Albert Myers, of Grand Forks, North Dakota, and his brothers Pete, Roy, Tom and John Myers, all born in New York State. Send word to William S. Myers, General Delivery, Alder, Montana.

Any members of the 1231st Co., C.C.C. stationed at Olympia, Wash., during 1933-34, especially Daniel F. Sprague, George Memmoli, and Peter Potocki, get in touch with James Richter, 603½ W. 48th Street, Los Angeles, Cal.

I want to re-contact members of Co. A—160th Engineers, who were in Camp Harris and Wheeler, at Macon, Georgia, June 12th to September 25th, 1917. D. F. Arthur, Bay Pines, Fla.

William O'Connors, last heard from at Redfield, South Dakota, in 1910. Word wanted by his mother, Mrs. Agnes Button, 520 N.E. 2nd Ave., Miami, Florida.

Would like to hear from R. E. Pullman & Anthony Cooper who were with me in California in 1919. William John Carson, 760 Pardella, Lemay, Mo.

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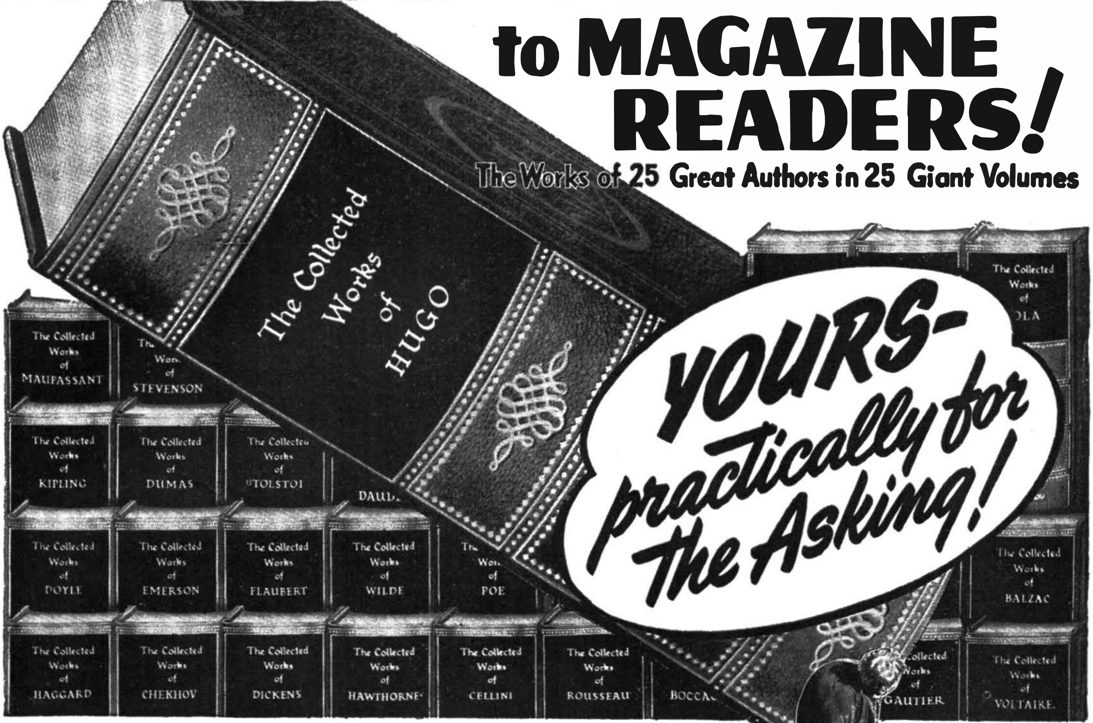
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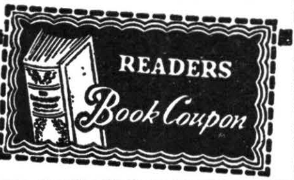
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